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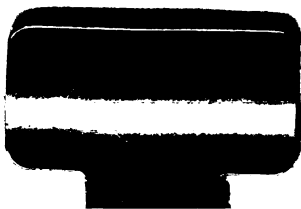
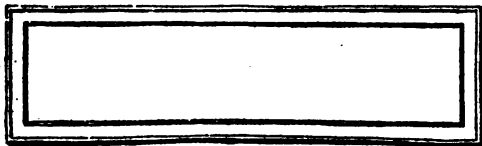
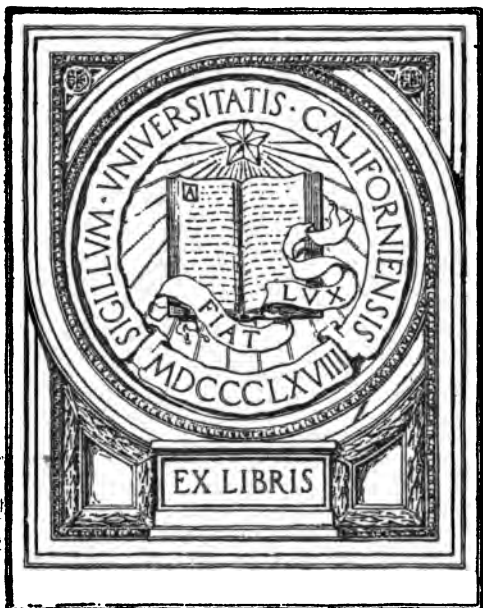


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HANDBOOK OF BUSINESS ENGLISH

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HOTCHKISS AND KILDUFF



# HANDBOOK OF BUSINESS ENGLISH

By

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## PREFACE

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This book has been prepared in answer to the current demand for a brief presentation of the principal rules of good English—grammar, sentence structure, paragraphing, punctuation, capitalization, letter writing, and report making—adapted to the needs of business.

Inasmuch as a large part of present-day business is conducted by letters and other written or printed communications, a command of good English—and English suited to business purposes—is necessary. The majority of business operations—collecting, answering complaints, ordering goods, selling, etc.—are conducted in writing, and this fact alone indicates the great importance in business, of the ability to write correct and forcible English. Many business houses have as a motto, “Put it in writing,” for their experience has shown that differences inevitably arise through verbal communications. The motto, however, is of little value unless the writer is able to *write well*. And to write well is to write so that there is no possibility of being misunderstood. If any disagreement as to the interpretation of a letter results in a law suit, the courts usually decide that the one who caused the misunderstanding is in fault.

Good business firms are coming to realize more and more that the persons with whom they do business, form their opinion of the firm from the English used in its letters and advertisements because, in most instances, these are the only points of contact between the firm and its customers. One

great house, Marshall Field and Company of Chicago, offers a reward of \$1 to the employee who first calls the attention of the Manager's Office to an error (other than typographical) in any of its advertisements. Other instances of business concerns which encourage the use of good English on the part of their employees, are the National City Bank, the New York *Times* (business department), and the Burroughs Adding Machine Company. These and many others maintain classes in Business English for the instruction of their employees.

The authors have found that up to the present time no handbook devoted solely to the exposition of the rules of good Business English has been published. While many excellent handbooks of English Composition have been published, the illustrations of rules given are not drawn from the business man's experience, and do not therefore come home to him. The examples in this book are taken entirely from letters, advertisements, and other forms of English used in business.

In some cases, the rules laid down are at variance with the accepted rules of literary composition, but the reader is reminded that the purpose of Business English differs from that of literary composition. In every instance the aim has been to present only those rules which have a direct bearing on the getting of results. This is the purpose of business and of every department of business; or, to put it more frankly, the main reason a business man should have a command of Business English is that it will help him in his business. The rules presented in this book have been formulated with a view to their usefulness in aiding the business man to write effectively.

It is the belief of the authors that this work will serve not only as a manual of correct forms of Business English and a concise presentation of its rules, but also as supplementary to texts dealing more specifically with business literature, such as letters, pamphlets, articles, reports, and advertisements.

The authors desire to acknowledge their indebtedness to many of their students who have been actually engaged in business, to *System*, to Woolley's *Handbook of Composition*, to A. H. Adley, and to Professor Archibald Bouton of New York University.

NEW YORK CITY,  
August 29, 1914.

G. B. H.  
E. J. K.

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## PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

The reception given to the first edition of the Handbook of Business English has been so much more cordial than even the authors had expected that in the second edition they have been encouraged to make extensive additions. These, however, have been so arranged that they do not interfere with the original numbering of the rules. Consequently, this new edition may be used side by side with the old one without confusion. Except for the addition of new material, the Handbook has been changed only by the correction of minor typographical errors. The general plan has sufficiently proved its usefulness.

NEW YORK CITY,  
August 14, 1915.

G. B. H.  
E. J. K.





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# DETAILED SYNOPSIS OF CONTENTS

## I. INTRODUCTION TO BUSINESS ENGLISH

(Numbers in Parentheses Refer to Paragraphs)

### *Business English Defined*

(1) Definition of Business English

(2) Not a separate language composed of stock phrases

(3) Involves right thinking and right technique

(4) Forms not fixed; no one best form of letter

(5) Concerned with motives that induce people to act

### *Impression versus Expression*

(6) Difference between Business English and literary composition

(7) Impression must be made

(8) Effective English required

### *The "You" Attitude*

(9) Meaning of "you" attitude

(10) Weakness of letters caused by wrong viewpoint

### *Adaptation to the Reader*

(11) In language, mood, character, and substance

(12) Adaptation in language to comprehension of reader

(13) Adaptation in language to direct purpose of letter

(14) Adaptation to mood of reader

(15) Adaptation to character of reader

(16) Adjustment to reader through selection of ideas

(17) Consider the reader first

### *Fundamental Qualities in Business English*

(18) Desired qualities; clearness, courtesy, conciseness, correctness, and character

(19) Reader is judge of qualities

(20a) Importance of clearness

(20b) Definition of clearness

(20c) Violation of clearness

(20d) Definition of ambiguity

(20e) Statement should have only one meaning

(20f) Definition of vagueness

(20g) Definition of obscurity

(20h) Reader is judge of clearness

(20i) Writer should be critical

(21a) Definition of courtesy; examples

(21b) Curtness

(Numbers in Parentheses Refer to Paragraphs)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (21c) Curtness to women                             | (23d) Usage determines correctness of make-up  |
| (21d) Courtesy and politeness                       | (23e) Incorrect grammar harmful                |
| (21e) Discourteous treatment of a letter            | (23f) Usage determines correctness of language |
| (22a) Conciseness is matter of adaptation to reader | (23g) Correctness in execution                 |
| (22b) Definition of conciseness                     | (24a) Importance of character                  |
| (22c) Two faults that arise                         | (24b) Definition of character                  |
| (22d) Grammatical incompleteness                    | (24c) To secure character                      |
| (22e) Curtness in tone                              |  |
| (23a) Definition of correctness                     | <i>Business English Style</i>                  |
| (23b) Importance of correct dress                   | (25a) Definition of style                      |
| (23c) Definition of mechanical make-up              | (25b) Versatility needed                       |
|   | (26) Encouragement of right habits             |

## II. GRAMMAR—GOOD USE IN THE SENTENCE

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Usage as a Factor in Business English</i>                         | (36) Plural form of subject with singular sense                     |
| (27) Importance of Usage; idioms                                     | (37) Number of collective nouns                                     |
| (28) Use of <i>Whoever</i> and <i>Whomever</i>                       | (38) Correct use of comparative degree                              |
| (29) Unusual construction  | (39) Each, either, etc., with singular number                       |
| <i>Grammatical Agreement</i>   | <i>Dangling Modifiers</i>   |
| (30)—(31) Agreement of subject and verb                              | (40)—(41) Participle as introduction word; in absolute construction |
| (32) Singular subjects joined by <i>or</i> or <i>nor</i>             | (42) Use of gerund phrase   |
| (33) Subjects of different numbers joined by <i>or</i> or <i>nor</i> | (43) Use of elliptical clause                                       |
| (34) Singular subject followed by parenthetical phrase               | <i>Clearness in Reference</i>                                       |
| (35) Singular form of subject with plural sense                      | (44) Vague use of pronouns  |
|  | (45) Vague reference to antecedent                                  |

(Numbers in Parentheses Refer to Paragraphs)

(46) Pronouns in indirect discourse

(47) Antecedent must precede

(48)—(49) Avoidance of ambiguity

*Errors in Case of Pronouns*

(50) Use of relative

(51) Predicate complement

(52) Subject of infinitive

(53) Complement of infinitive

(54) Case of the object

(55) Case of the appositive

(56) Use of *than* and *as*

*Possessives*

(57a) Forming possessive of singular nouns

(57b) Of plural nouns ending in *s*

(57c) Of plural nouns not ending in *s*

(57d) Of compound noun or noun phrase

(57e) Of nouns in apposition

(57f) Beware of doubtful meaning

(57g) Use of double possessive

(57h) Possessive adjectives

(57i) Possessive case to show real ownership

(58) Possessive ownership used with verbal nouns

*Adjectives and Adverbs*

(59) After *look, sound, taste, smell, feel*, etc.

(60) Rule for adjective and adverb

*Question of Tense*

(61) Tense of verb

(62) Tense of principal verbs

(63) Use of perfect indicative

(64) Principal and dependent verb

(65) Expressions of fact

(66) Use of perfect infinitive; rule for *ought, need, must*, and *should*

(67) Verb in dependent clause

(68) Use of present participle

(69)—(71) Use of *shall* and *will*

(72) Form of *shall* and *will* in indirect discourse

(73) *Shall* and *will* in conditional clauses

(74)—(75) Use of *should* and *would*

*General Errors*

(76) *When* and *where* clause

(77) Sentence as subject of *is* and *was*

(78) Double negative

(79) Use of *hardly, scarcely, only*, and *but*

(80)—(81) Use of *any* and *all*

III. SENTENCE STRUCTURE

*Length*

(82) Sentence defined

(83) Sentence length; importance of; long and short



(Numbers in Parentheses Refer to Paragraphs)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>(84) Character through sentence length</p> <p>(85) Short sentence for sales-letters, etc.</p> <p>(86) Use of long sentence</p> <p>(87) Use of long, smooth sentences</p> <p><i>Kinds of Sentences</i></p> <p>(88) <i>Loose, periodic, and balanced</i></p> <p>(89) The loose sentence</p> <p>(90) The periodic sentence</p> <p>(91) The balanced sentence</p> <p><i>The Principles of Construction</i></p> <p>(92) <i>Unity, coherence, and emphasis</i> in business letters</p> <p><i>Unity in the Sentence</i></p> <p>(93) Unity defined</p> <p>(94) Unlike statements</p> <p>(95) Connecting unlike statements</p> <p>(96) Sentences connected by <i>and's</i> and <i>but's</i></p> <p>(97) Faults of long sentences</p> <p>(98) Long sentences in business letters</p> <p>(99) Changing point of view</p> <p>(100) Phrases, clauses, and sentences to be connected</p> <p>(101) Unrelated clauses separated by comma ("Comma fault")</p> <p><i>Coherence</i></p> <p>(102) Requirements of</p> <p>(103) Position of modifiers</p> | <p>(104) The split infinitive</p> <p>(105) Position of adverbs</p> <p>(106) Position of correlatives</p> <p>(107) Participle in absolute construction</p> <p>(108) Loose arrangement of clauses</p> <p>(109) Long, ill-connected sentences</p> <p>(110) Connections incorrect</p> <p>(111) Arrangement of sentence elements</p> <p><i>Omissions</i></p> <p>(112) Needful words</p> <p>(113) Parts of verbs</p> <p>(114) The verb <i>be</i></p> <p>(115) Principal verbs should be expressed</p> <p>(116) Expressions of comparison</p> <p>(117) Single modifiers limiting two sentence elements</p> <p>(118) Incomplete members of sentence</p> <p>(119) Subjects in first person</p> <p>(120) <i>A, an, and the</i> to be expressed</p> <p>(121) Subordinating conjunctions</p> <p>(122) Omission of preposition</p> <p>(123) Incomplete comparison</p> <p><i>Coördination and Subordination</i></p> <p>(124)—(125) Use of <i>and</i> and <i>but</i> and <i>or</i></p> |
|---|---|

(Numbers in Parentheses Refer to Paragraphs)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
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|--|--|

#### IV. PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>(151) Definition of paragraph</p> <p>(152) Purpose of paragraph</p> <p>(153) Effect of paragraph on eye and mind</p> <p>(154) Paragraph signs</p> <p>(155) Length of paragraph</p> <p>(156) Length, how determined</p> <p>(157) <i>Varieties of paragraph</i></p> <p>(158)—(160) The short paragraph; value; definition</p> | <p>(161) Variety of paragraphs pleasing</p> <p>(162) Important clause as paragraph</p> <p>(163) Paragraphing in sales-letters</p> <p>(164) Paragraphs to effect action</p> <p>(165) Use of long paragraphs</p> <p>(166) Impression secured by long paragraphs</p> |
|--|---|

(Numbers in Parentheses Refer to Paragraphs)

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|---|---|
| <p>(167) Long paragraphs convince<br/><i>Unity in the Paragraph</i><br/>(168) Purpose of paragraphing<br/>(169) How to secure good paragraphs<br/>(170) Value of paragraphs to reader<br/>(171) Should contain but one distinct idea<br/>(172) Test for unity<br/>(173) Functions of letters determine paragraph<br/>(174) Paragraphs in complaint letter; a model letter<br/>(175) Paragraphs in sales letter<br/>(176) Paragraphing a conversation<br/><i>Form Paragraphs</i><br/>(177) Purpose of<br/>(178) Principle of unity<br/>(179) Routine correspondence<br/>(180) Letter from form paragraphs<br/><i>Coherence in the Paragraph</i><br/>(181) How secured<br/>(182) Close connection important<br/>(183) Logical relation and form</p> | <p>(184) Use of connecting words in paragraphs<br/>(185) Use of <i>to be sure</i>, etc.<br/>(186) <i>Therefore, hence</i>, etc., used to indicate relation<br/>(187) Use of <i>but, nevertheless</i>, etc.<br/>(188) Use of demonstratives<br/>(189) Point of view in paragraph<br/>(190) Chronological order in paragraph<br/>(191) Narrative order<br/>(192) Descriptive order<br/>(193) Expository type<br/>(194) Argumentative type<br/>(195) Deductive order<br/>(196) Inductive order<br/>(197) Climactic order<br/>(198) Amplifying paragraph<br/>(199) Topic sentence paragraph<br/>(200) Some order needed<br/><i>Emphasis in the Paragraph</i><br/>(201) Securing emphasis<br/>(202) Important positions in paragraphs<br/>(203) Use of the short sentence<br/>(204) Short passage made important</p> |
|---|---|

## V. DICTION

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>(205) Importance of diction<br/>(206) Quality of business</p> | <p>writing<br/>(207) Helpful principles</p> |
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(Numbers in Parentheses Refer to Paragraphs)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>(208) Good usage defined</p> <p>(209) <i>Reputable</i> words; a. Vulgarisms; b. Words in correct sense; c. Words spelled or sounding alike; d. Slang</p> <p>(210) <i>National</i> words; meaning of <i>national</i>; a. Provincial words; b. Technical words</p> <p>(211) <i>Present</i> words; a. Obsolete words; b. Newly coined words</p> <p>(212) Use of intensive pronoun</p> <p>(213) <i>They</i> in indefinite sense</p> <p>(214) <i>It</i> in indefinite sense</p> <p>(215) <i>Characterless</i> expressions</p> <p>(216) Contractions</p> <p>(217) Long and unusual words</p> <p>(218) Pretentious expressions</p> <p>(219)—(220) Use specific words</p> | <p>(221) Words of unpleasant suggestion</p> <p><i>Superfluous Words</i></p> <p>(222) <i>Redundancy, tautology, and verbosity</i></p> <p>(223) Redundancy obscures</p> <p>(224) Tautology wearies</p> <p>(225) Verbosity not effective</p> <p><i>Prepositions</i></p> <p>(226) Wrong use of preposition; illustrative table</p> <p><i>Figures of Speech</i></p> <p>(227) Use of</p> <p>(228) Improper simile or metaphor</p> <p>(229) Blending literal with metaphorical</p> <p>(230) Unpleasant figures</p> <p><i>Miscellaneous Faulty Expressions</i></p> <p>(231) Alphabetic list of words and expressions frequently misused</p> |
|--|---|

VI. TONE AND VARIETY

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><i>The Tone of the House</i></p> <p>(232) In letters express character of house</p> <p>(233) How tone is secured</p> <p>(234) Dignified letters, example from bond house</p> <p><i>Editorial Manual for Correspondents</i></p> <p>(235) Letters of distinction</p> <p>(236) Personality in letters;</p> | <p>how uniformity is secured</p> <p>(237) Rules for correspondents</p> <p>(238) Handbook as editorial manual</p> <p>(239) Attitude of writer; how determined</p> <p><i>Style Adapted to the Reader</i></p> <p>(240) Securing results through tone</p> |
|--|---|

(Numbers in Parentheses Refer to Paragraphs)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>(241) Sales-letters to ladies<br/>                 (242) Example of wrong tone<br/>                 (243) Advertisements for educated classes; use of French<br/>                 (244) Letters to farmers<br/>                 (245) Sporting goods advertisements<br/>                 (246) Uniform tone to be maintained<br/>                 (247) Positive beginnings</p> | <p>(248) Pleasing variety in sentence<br/>                 (249) Monotony fatal<br/>                 (250) Violation of variety; a. Frequent compound sentences; b. Use of absolute phrases; c. Use of <i>so</i>; d. Use of <i>after this, there is, now</i>, etc.; e. Frequent use of <i>therefore, however</i>, etc.</p> |
|--|--|

### VII. THE OUTLINE

*General Discussions*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>(251) Importance of outline<br/>                 (252) Outline is a coördinated arrangement; three essentials<br/>                 (253) Unity<br/>                 (254) Simple construction<br/>                 (255) Proportion to be maintained</p> | <p>(256) Five parts of outline: 1. The subject; 2. The Point of view; 3. Main topics; 4. Subdivisions; 5. Clearness, unity, simplicity, and proportion<br/>                 (257) Outline of sales report<br/>                 (258) Revision of outline</p> |
|---|--|

### VIII. BUSINESS REPORTS

*Definition of a Business Report*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>(259) Contents<br/>                 (260) Purpose<br/>                 (261) Maker and receiver<br/>                 (262) Various uses<br/>                 (263) The reporter</p> | <p>(269) Items properly displayed<br/>                 (270)—(271) Facts separated from recommendations<br/>                 (272) Recommendations simple and definite<br/>                 (273) Nature of report, how determined</p> |
|--|--|

*Different Kinds of Reports*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>(264) Varied nature of reports<br/>                 (265) Personal and impersonal forms<br/>                 (266) Importance of contents</p> | <p>(274) Titles to be inclusive<br/>                 (275) Beginning and end of report; example of presentation and conclusion</p> |
|--|--|

*Arrangement of a Business Report*

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| <p>(267)—(268) Arrangement important</p> | <p><i>Clearness in the Business Report</i><br/>                 (276) Clearness and convenience essential</p> |
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(Numbers in Parentheses Refer to Paragraphs)

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|---|---|
| (277) Clearness, how obtained<br>(278) Simple language and use<br>of diagrams<br><i>Miscellaneous Points</i><br>(279) Common errors in re-<br>ports | (280) The necessity of an out-<br>line<br>(281) Proportion<br>(282) Points for checking<br>(283) Accountants' reports |
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### IX. PUNCTUATION AND CAPITALIZATION

#### *The Comma*

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|---|---|
| (284) Shortest stop<br>(285) After each word of a<br>series<br>(286) Sets off direct address<br>(287) Sets off absolute phrases<br>(288) Sets off intermediate ex-<br>pressions<br>(289) Sets off appositives<br>(290) Indicates an ellipsis<br>(291) Separates geographical<br>names<br>(292) Separates two numbers<br>(293) Sets off a quotation<br>(294) Between independent<br>clauses<br>(295) Sets off a dependent<br>clause<br>(296) Sets off "not" before<br>antithesis<br>(297) Separates sentence ele-<br>ments<br>(298) Separates two adjectives<br>(299) Separates name and title<br>(300) Between parts of a<br>series<br>(301) Between repeated or<br>similar words, etc. | (302) Divides numbers into<br>groups<br>(303) Sets off a non-restrictive<br>clause<br>(304) Omitted before restric-<br>tive clause<br>(305) Sets off certain adverbs<br>(306) Separates similar words<br>(307) Separates a series of<br>three or more words<br>(308) Omitted before a num-<br>ber<br>(309) Omitted after a short<br>inversion<br>(310) Omitted before <i>that</i><br>(311) The comma fault<br><br><i>The Semi-Colon</i><br>(312) Longer separation than<br>comma<br>(313)—(314) Separates parts<br>of a compound sentence<br>(315) Setting off conjunctive<br>adverbs<br>(316) Used with commas in<br>compound sentences<br>(317) When comma is not<br>enough |
|---|---|

(Numbers in Parentheses Refer to Paragraphs)

*The Colon*

- (318) A mark of equality
- (319) Before certain expressions
- (320) After introductory word, phrase, etc.
- (321) After formal salutation
- (322) To separate hours and minutes

*The Dash*

- (323) Indicates abrupt change
- (324) Sudden break in speech
- (325) Takes place of comma
- (326) Takes place of parenthesis
- (327) Before a word which sums up
- (328) To connect dates
- (329) Between short sentences

*The Period*

- (330) Mark of finality
- (331) At end of sentence
- (332) After abbreviations

*The Exclamation Mark*

- (333) Indicates feeling
- (334) Expresses irony

*The Question Mark*

- (335) After direct questions

*Parenthesis Marks*

- (336) Enclose independent elements

*Brackets*

- (337) Enclose explanatory statements

*Quotation Marks*

- (338) Enclose direct quotations
- (339) Use of single quotations
- (340) When omitted
- (341)—(342) Where placed
- (343) Omission of punctuation

*The Apostrophe*

- (344) Indicates omissions
- (345) Forms possessives
- (346) Not used with possessive adjectives

*The Hyphen*

- (347) At end of line
- (348) Divides compound words
- (349) Used with *to-day*, etc.
- (350) Words divided at end of syllable
- (351) Avoid double punctuation

*Capitalization*

- (352) Proper names and adjectives
- (353) Important words
- (354) First word of a sentence
- (355) Titles
- (356) Sections of country
- (357) Days of week
- (358) Official titles

## X. THE MECHANICAL MAKE-UP OF A LETTER

*Editorial Manuals for Typists*

- (359) Standardized Letters

- (360) Manual of rules for business house

(Numbers in Parentheses Refer to Paragraphs)

*The Outward Appearance of a Letter*

- (361) Impression on the reader
- (362) Quality and size of paper
- (363) Sales-letter matters
- (364) Six parts in make-up of letter

*The Printed Heading*

- (365) Quality of business letter-head
- (366) Script heading
- (367) Color of headings

*Written Headings*

- (368) Forms of headings
- (369) Contents of heading
- (370) Abbreviations
- (371) Street number
- (372) When spelled out
- (373) Content of date
- (374) Dates not written out in full
- (375) Abbreviations for date numbers
- (376) Use more than one line

*Inside Address*

- (377) Personal form
- (378) Contents of
- (379) The word *City*
- (380) Titles
- (381) Use of "esquire"
- (382) *Miss* as title
- (383) *Messrs.* as title
- (384) Right use of *Messrs.*
- (385) Initial titles
- (386) When presenting a report

- (387) In official letter
- (388) The street address

*The Salutation*

- (389) Use of salutation
- (390) Where written
- (391)—(393) Forms to be avoided
- (394) Odd cases
- (395) Use of name alone
- (396) Abbreviated forms
- (397) Punctuation
- (398) Official letters

*The Body of a Letter*

- (399) Amount of material
- (400) Indention of paragraph
- (401) Handwritten letter
- (402) Standardized form

*Complimentary Close*

- (403) Beginning of
- (404)—(405) Correct forms
- (406) Forms to be avoided
- (407) Correct punctuation

*The Signature*

- (408) Position of
- (409) The firm name
- (410) Typing the signature
- (411) Omission of title
- (412) Signature of married woman
- (413) Signature of unmarried woman

*Other Points about the Letter*

- (414) Postscript
- (415) Discourteous expressions



(Numbers in Parentheses Refer to Paragraphs)

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|--|---|
| <p>(416) Identity of dictator and transcriber</p> <p>(417) Enclosures</p> <p>(418) Written on one side only</p> <p>(419) The last sheet</p> <p>(420) Folding</p> <p>(421) Securing personal attention</p> <p><i>The Envelope</i></p> <p>(422) Correct size</p> <p>(423) The address</p> <p>(424) Placing of address</p> <p>(425) Division of address</p> <p>(426) Personal attention indicated</p> | <p>(427) Envelope should be neat</p> <p><i>Official Letters</i></p> <p>(428) When used</p> <p>(429) Stationery used</p> <p>(430) Small letter-head used</p> <p>(431) Classes of official letters</p> <p><i>Formal Official Letters</i></p> <p>(432) To whom addressed</p> <p>(433) Mechanical form of</p> <p>(434) The salutation</p> <p>(435) Body of letter</p> <p><i>Informal Official Letters</i></p> <p>(436) When used</p> <p>(437) The inside address</p> <p>(438) Salutation informal</p> |
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## XI. THE COMPOSITION AS A WHOLE

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|--|---|
| <p><i>How Effective Writing May be Secured</i></p> <p>(439) Constructive side of writing</p> <p>(440) Writer must know principles of construction</p> <p><i>The Three Principles of Effective Writing</i></p> <p>(441) Principles are natural laws</p> <p><i>The Principle of Unity</i></p> <p>(442) Singleness of impression</p> <p>(443) Concentration on one idea</p> <p>(444) Selection a matter of judgment</p> <p>(445) Writer must know purpose and technique</p> | <p>(446) Idea must be complete</p> <p>(447) Non-essentials must be excluded</p> <p><i>The Efficiency of Singleness of Impression</i></p> <p>(448) Trouble caused by un-unified letter</p> <p>(449) Letter should contain only one main idea</p> <p>(450) Test compositions for unity</p> <p><i>The Principle of Coherence</i></p> <p>(451) Principle of arrangement and connection</p> <p>(452) Some definite order necessary</p> <p>(453) Progress from reader's to writer's viewpoint</p> |
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(Numbers in Parentheses Refer to Paragraphs)

*The Use of Connection to Secure Smoothness*

- (454) Methods of general connection
- (455) Methods of specific connection
- (456) Use of various kinds of connectives
- (457) Use of repetition
- (458) Use of transitional sentence
- (459) Use of topic sentence
- (460) Use of transitional paragraph
- (461) Connotative coherence
- (462) Example of coherence
- (463) Coherence secured by interest
- (464) Active coherence
- (465) First paragraph should secure interest
- (466) Paragraphs should begin interestingly

*Emphasis*

- (467) Arrangement to secure impression
- (468) Emphasis used only when needed
- (469) Use of position and proportion

*The Use of Position to Secure Emphasis*

- (470) Importance of beginning and ending
- (471) Two important places in letter

- (472) Misuse of important positions

*How to Begin the Letter*

- (473) Beginning is important
- (474) Reader's viewpoint at start
- (475) Example of complaint letter
- (476) Purpose of letter in first paragraph
- (477) Acknowledgment of receipt of letter
- (478) How to weave in date
- (479) Other methods of acknowledgment
- (480) Beginning of sales-letter

*How to End the Letter*

- (481) Ending should not be weak
- (482) Sliding-off ending is weak
- (483) Participial ending is incorrect
- (484) Make definite statement

*The Use of Proportion to Secure Emphasis*

- (485) Important ideas should have room

*The Use of Climax to Secure Emphasis*

- (486) Definition of climax
- (487) Danger of anti-climax
- (488) Arrangement of arguments

(Numbers in Parentheses Refer to Paragraphs)

<i>The Use of Pause to Secure Emphasis</i>	(492) Mechanical emphasis
(489) Definition of pause	<i>How to Dictate Answers to Letters</i>
(490) Use of Dash	(493) Aids to correct dictation
(491) Use of paragraphing	

# Handbook of Business English

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## I. INTRODUCTION TO BUSINESS ENGLISH

### *Business English Defined*

**1.** Business English composition, as treated in this book, is confined to the art of employing written English to arouse in others such feelings and ideas as shall cause action that results in business profit, and to do so with the least waste of time, effort, and money. It includes all written messages used in commercial transactions for the purpose of securing a profitable response by impressing the reader.

**2.** Business English is not a separate language in the sense of being composed of words and phrases peculiar to business transactions. The dictator who has at the tip of his tongue such stock expressions as "Yours of the 15th inst. to hand," "Pursuant to yours of even date," and so on, is not necessarily a writer of good Business English. These expressions are not so efficient as simple expressions that mean the same thing; they injure rather than aid. They are weak because the average man never writes them, and certainly the average man never speaks them. They destroy the personality of the letter.

**3.** Like any other branch of business composition, Business English involves two processes, *right thinking* and *right technique*. The writer must think clearly, know the solution of his business problem, and express and impress his ideas precisely.

4. The forms in which business communications are written are not fixed, but are of necessity elastic in order to lend themselves to a variety of uses. There is no such thing as a best form of collection letter or a best form of letter answering a complaint. Each case is individual because each reader is individual.

5. Business English has to do not merely with composition, but also with the motives which *induce* people to act. In other words, the writer must comprehend the whole psychological problem involved in any given case, and must make use of his knowledge in the expression of his thoughts.

#### *Impression versus Expression*

6. The main difference between literary composition and Business English is the purpose. In most forms of literary composition the writer endeavors to express his thoughts with clearness and precision for the purpose of giving information or entertaining the reader; in Business English, however, the purpose is profits. Since Business English must produce a profit, it must not merely please or instruct the reader; it must cause him to act—it must make him respond. The test, therefore, of the business letter is this: does it make the reader do what you want him to do? Does it bring the response you wish?

7. In literary composition the writer usually considers only the *expression* of his ideas; in Business English the writer must consider not only the expression of his ideas but also the *impression* upon the mind of the reader. He must make such an impression upon the reader's mind as shall arouse him to the desired course of action. This impression

can be secured only by conveying the writer's own idea to the reader in such a way that the latter shall accept the former's point of view.

8. Business men are not purists: they do not always demand nicety in language. It is not always necessary that polished diction and well-rounded sentences be used. It is not fatal if a business message should violate a rule or convention now and then. Contractions, slang, colloquialisms are allowed in many cases, and at times are more effective than pure English would be. All this is so because the important and, for that matter, the only real purpose of a business communication is the transmission of a message. If the reader understands the message just as the writer wishes it understood and acts just as the writer wishes him to act, there certainly can be no cause for complaint. At the same time it can never be said that the message will be fully understood unless the expression is clear, the punctuation correct, and choice of words accurate. Hence it is necessary that certain rules of form be observed, for they will aid in getting the right result.

### *The "You" Attitude*

9. The "You" attitude means that the words *I, we, my, mine, ours*, and so on, are subordinated as much as possible. It means that the writer shall have a sincere regard for the reader and shall take his viewpoint. No other appeal is so direct, so effective, as that which is summed up in the words *you, your business, your profits, your welfare*. Keep before the reader his interests, not yours. Show the reader how your proposition will benefit him. Look at the problem

through the eyes of the reader. Remember that of the three factors involved in a message (the sender; the subject, or idea; and the reader) the third, the reader, is the most important.

**10.** The weakness of most letters is due not to ungrammatical sentences or to poor style, but to the wrong viewpoint. To overcome this weakness two things will help: first, know your product or proposition; second, know the reader you are trying to reach. The examples given below show how prominent should be the "You" attitude.

Wrong: *We* beg to announce that *we* are putting out on the market *our* new bathrobe. *We* should like to sell you some of these because *we* know that *our* bathrobes are the best on the market.

Right: *You* can sell even better bathrobes at the price *you* have been charging *your* customers, and thus further develop *your* trade by the most effective of all advertising—the recommendation of man to man.

*Or*

*You* can make a wider margin of profit on every sale by putting prices a peg higher—and still give *your* customers gloriously good value for their money.

### *Adaptation to the Reader*

**11.** In order to make the desired impression upon the reader's mind, it is essential that some adjustment should be made if the message is to be conveyed. Business English composition should be adapted to the reader in language, mood, character, and substance. The language must be such as the reader would use or understand, and such as is best

suit<sup>ed</sup> for the occasion. The mood or tone must be such as will make the best appeal to the reader and will best aid in getting him to do what the writer wants. The character must be of the kind to make the deepest impression on him. The arguments used must be those that appeal to him.

**12.** The adaptation in language consists, first, in the use of such words, sentences, and paragraphs as are surely within the comprehension of the reader. In answering a letter written on a mere scrap of paper and showing illiteracy, the writer should use simple words, sentences, and paragraphs.

**13.** Adaptation in language also means that the language used should be well suited to the direct purpose of the letter. If the letter, for example, is a sales letter to a business man, the language used should be of the kind that is easily read; i. e., short sentences, words, and paragraphs. Again, since the purpose of a letter is to incite action, the words, sentences, and paragraphs should be short, sharp, and incisive. If, on the other hand, the writer is answering a letter of complaint written by an angry man, he should use the kind of language which would tend, from its mere type, to soothe and allay the anger of the complainant. He would use long, smooth sentences and paragraphs, for they tend to soothe.

**14.** Adaptation in mood means that the writer should adapt himself to the mood of the reader. If the reader has made a complaint, the writer should put himself into a friendly, sincere, and sympathetic attitude before he commits his answer to paper. If the reader is indifferent to a sales proposition, the writer must put himself into an enthusiastic mood which will carry him away. If the reader is antagonistic, the writer must be tactful and diplomatic. The object



of the writer is to create a co-operative and sympathetic state of mind and not to stir up opposition or resentment.

**15.** Adaptation to the character or personality of the reader means that the language and tone of the composition must not clash with the known characteristics of the reader. In most cases the writer is able to learn of the character of the reader from his letter; he may know it from acquaintance with him, from his business position, his nationality, credit rating, and from many other factors. If the writer finds by analysis that the reader is conservative in character, he should adapt the tone of his letter to the character of the reader and make the character or tone of his letter conservative by expressing his ideas in non-colloquial, formal, and dignified language. If the writer finds by analysis, however, that the reader is progressive, live, and up-to-date, a short, brisk appeal will be more likely to make a good impression. Sales letters sent to ladies should be polished, courteous, and non-colloquial in character. Letters sent out by firms like banking and bond houses should be dignified and conservative.

**16.** Adaptation or adjustment in substance means that from the ideas at the disposal of the writer, those should be selected that are closest to the reader's experience and interests. The writer should sufficiently understand the reader to know that of the arguments, selling points, appeals, ideas, and so on, certain ones will most directly reach the reader. The writer, therefore, should direct his persuasion at the interests that govern the reader and so fit his appeals to these specific interests.

**17.** The fault of failing to look at the problem through

the eyes of the reader is common in business. The ordinary seller tries to force *his* ideas as to why the buyer should buy, instead of trying to find the advantage that will result to the benefit of the buyer. A man looking for a position puts *his* reasons and *his* ambitions forward, instead of showing to the prospective employer how well he would fit in with the scheme of work of the prospective employer. "Consider the reader first" should be the motto of the letter-writer.

### *Fundamental Qualities in Business English*

**18.** A careful examination of the correspondence and other forms of composition, such as pamphlets, circulars, and so on, sent out by the best business houses, has revealed the fact that certain qualities are common to all forms of good Business English. These qualities are five in number: Clearness, Courtesy, Conciseness, Correctness, and Character.

**19.** Of all these qualities or characteristics of Business English, with the possible exception of the quality of correctness, the *reader* and not the writer is the judge. This fact can be easily understood from an explanation of the matter of clearness. In many cases the writer thinks that his writing is clear; but the reader is unable to understand it. It is not what the writer thinks about his message that counts so much as what the *reader* thinks. Letters that the writer intended to be courteous may appear discourteous to the reader.

**20a.** The first quality of importance in a business composition is that of clearness, for the purpose of the composition is to convey a certain message to the reader. Business men realize the importance of clearness, for they have had

it brought home to them so often in matters of disagreements and misunderstandings. It is obvious that, if a business composition is not clear and does not convey its idea to the reader on the first honest reading, it is likely to be a financial loss, for few readers will take the time to study out what the writer had in mind when he wrote it. Clearness is obtained by clear thinking and by simple and precise expression.

**20b.** A composition is said to have the quality of clearness when the ideas are so expressed that the ordinary reader need exert little mental effort to understand them and *cannot misunderstand them*. Clearness, in other words, recognizes the law of economizing the reader's attention. Herbert Spencer's idea of this law may be expressed as follows: Everyone at a given moment has a certain amount of power of attention. Accordingly, whatever part of this power is used upon the *form* of the message must be deducted from the total; the remainder is left to comprehend the message itself. Those word combinations therefore are best which require the least energy for the comprehension of their meaning.

**20c.** The quality of clearness is violated in three common ways: By *ambiguity*, by *vagueness*, and by *obscurity*.

**20d.** Ambiguity means that a statement admits of more than one meaning. As a result of this double meaning the reader is very likely to take a wrong understanding of the idea. (See Rules 43-49.)

**20e.** The writer should take care that his statements can be understood in but one way. He should first think clearly and then write precisely.

**20f.** Vagueness means that the statement is not definite in meaning. Although not meaningless, it is likely not to convey much meaning. The reader gets a meaning, but it is not the writer's entire and exact meaning. Circumstances determine vagueness to a great extent. For example, if a large wholesaler in sugar were to receive a letter from one of his regular customers saying "What has become of our 'sugars'?" the message would be said to be vague, for in this particular case the customer might have four or five orders in the process of being filled, and the wholesaler would not know exactly what was meant by "Our sugars." Again, if in answer to a letter that asks what time an order would be shipped the following were sent, it would be said to be vague: "We think that perhaps we may be able to ship your order soon." Vagueness is caused by the use of inexact and unspecific words and expressions. This fault may be avoided by making the thought exact and specific, and using exact and specific words to express it.

**20g.** Obscurity means that a statement is not readily understood, although by careful rereading and study the reader may finally understand what the writer intended to say. Few compositions in Business English, however, are usually considered important enough for a second reading. In fact, many readers have neither the time nor the disposition to read a message.

Example: In reply to your esteemed favor of the 25th inst. relative to Parcels Post charges on pick up orders, beg to state, we will, temporarily until we can determine just what readjustment of your stock is necessary to take care of your requirements unless we are compelled before on

account of the expense to discontinue, arrange to stand all such Parcels Post expense on shipments made direct to your shop.

**20h.** It is true, of course, that sometimes a message that is obscure to the average reader is clear to those for whom it is intended. A report from one engineer to another engineer on the construction of a bridge would not perhaps be very clear to the lay reader because of the use of technical expressions, but it would be clear to an engineer. The reader is judge of the quality of clearness.

The cylinder mold is made up of brass spiders evenly spaced upon a steel shaft. Grooves are milled on the circumference of these spiders to hold brass rods. The end spiders are a little larger, and holes are drilled in them to hold the ends of the rods. Grooves are then cut in the rods, and copper wire is wound around. This winding is done in the lathe, and the wires are about an eighth of an inch apart.

**20i.** Clearness, therefore, exists if the combination of words used to express the thought carries to the reader definitely and unmistakably the thought of the writer. Clearness is secured by constantly working for it. The writer should ask himself "Just what do I mean?" "Do these words say just what I mean?" "Do they say anything I do not mean?" The writer should be critical of his own work.

**21a.** Courtesy means that the writer should have a due regard for the point of view of the reader. The writer must acquire the ability to put himself in the reader's place and to view his own letter through the reader's eyes. Curtness, snappishness, and impoliteness should be avoided. The "You" attitude should be used. The writer should be

courteous and show that he has a sincere regard for his reader.

Discourteous:

Dear Sir:

We have not heard from you in regard to our last order. What's the matter with you anyway? Don't you think we are in a hurry for it?

Very truly yours,

Better:

Dear Sir:

We have as yet received no word from you in regard to our order of January 24. As we are in a hurry for this order, won't you kindly look up the matter and let us know about it as soon as possible?

Very truly yours,

**21b.** Curtness is a milder form of discourtesy, but it is harmful to good business. It is usually brought about unconsciously by the reader's striving for conciseness of expression.

Dear Sir:

Yours of the 15th to hand. We do not make suits to order.  
Yours, etc.

In this particular example the discourtesy can be changed to courtesy by a more adequate consideration of the letter and by the use of several polite phrases.

Dear Sir:

Thank you for your letter of January 15 in which you ask us as to whether we make suits to order. We wish to say that our whole business is concerned with ready-made clothes.

We number among our customers many who formerly thought nothing was so good as tailor-made clothes. Now they are getting more satisfaction from our clothes—and at a lower cost.

Won't you drop in to see us?

**21c.** Letters to women—who for the most part are unused to the short, snappy letters of business—should be carefully watched for the fault of curtness. Women very easily take offense at any abruptness in tone.

**21d.** Courtesy does not, as many consider it, consist only of polite terms and phrases. Many a letter that has polite phrases scattered throughout is discourteous. Politeness is merely a veneer. Courtesy goes deeper. It is a sincere regard for the other man—the reader. Formal phrases of politeness can in no way take the place of true courtesy. Indeed, such an expression as “Thanking you in advance” is actually discourteous, as it discounts the value of the favor asked. “Dictated but not signed” also savors of discourtesy. Do not use such expressions.

**21e.** A violation of courtesy may arise from the discourteous treatment given to a letter. Do not, for example, scribble the answer on the original letter and mail it back. It suggests that you considered the letter so unimportant that you didn't care to keep it.

**22a.** The quality of conciseness is a good example of the fact that the reader is the judge of the qualities that a letter possesses and that all qualities are relative. A letter that is considered concise by the business man might be considered curt by a woman and might be considered lacking

in details by a farmer. True conciseness in Business English, therefore, is a matter of adaptation to the reader.

**22b.** This much about conciseness is certain: the thoughts and ideas of the writer should be expressed in as few words as will convey the message unmistakably to the reader. Conciseness means that the ideas are expressed briefly, but still with grammatical completeness.

**22c.** Two common faults arise from the attempt to secure conciseness: (1) grammatical incompleteness of sentences, and (2) curtness or snappishness in tone.

**22d.** Grammatical incompleteness arises when the writer, in a mistaken attempt to secure brevity of expression, omits the subject of the sentence, a part of the verb, or some other important element that is needed to complete the grammatical construction of the sentence. (See Rules 112-123). Such omissions cause ambiguity, obscurity, and hence, instead of hastening the comprehension of the thought, impede it. In telegrams, cablegrams, and the like, the message is expressed in the fewest words compatible with clearness.

**22e.** The other fault brought about by a mistaken idea of conciseness is that of curtness or snappishness of tone. The message is expressed in as few words as possible to convey the message, but in certain cases the reader receives a disagreeable impression from the tone of the message. (See Rule 21b.)

**23a.** The quality of correctness is present if the mechanical form of the composition is in accord with the rules of mechanical make-up; if the language is in accord with the usage of good modern writers; and if the technique—the



execution of the composition—is correct from the business point of view.

**23b.** At the first meeting, a man is judged by his personal appearance—his clothes, his looks, and so on—and by his speech. Many of these snap judgments based on a man's appearance have been erroneous—but it takes much to change a first impression—especially if that first impression be a poor one. So it is that the person or concern presenting a business message to one reader or a hundred thousand readers cannot afford to allow the mechanical make-up—the dress—of the message to make a poor impression. The appearance of the composition must be good. Correct dress commands a certain amount of respect and attention.

**23c.** The mechanical make-up deals with externals; that is, the margins, the typing, the placing of the matter on the page, and so on—whether it be a letter, an advertisement, a pamphlet, report, or other form of business composition.

**23d.** Correctness of the dress of a letter is a matter determined by usage—present day usage. Because of its long and constant use, the letter has become more or less conventionalized as to form, but certain parts of the letter have changed. The sliding off, participial ending of sixty years ago was as follows:

“Assuring you of our great pleasure in having been given this opportunity to serve you, allow us to subscribe ourselves as, Your faithful and humble servants, John Jones & Company.”

Such a complimentary close would now be judged incorrect because of its not being in conformity with the present day custom of the best business houses. To be in correct mechanical make-up, the letter must conform with present day usage. What this usage is and by whom it is decided are questions that naturally arise. Usage, it may be said, is the practice of the majority of the best authorities. Usage, however, like fashion, is constantly changing. What was correct yesterday may not be correct to-day; what is correct to-day may not be correct to-morrow. Not many years ago the script letterhead was in vogue; nowadays simple Roman type is preferred.

**23e.** A man is judged by his speech. If that be crude and ungrammatical the speaker stands condemned. Faults in speech are by no means so glaring as faults in writing, for in the latter case faults are in a lasting form so that all may see and laugh. A business man cannot afford to be misjudged—he cannot afford to send out letters that have errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling. If he does send out such letters, he lowers himself and his proposition in the estimation of the men with whom he deals.

**23f.** Correct grammar passes unnoticed, as it should, for it is expected. Bad grammar, since it attracts attention to itself, distracts the reader from the message and gives him an unfavorable impression both of the writer and of the proposition. Correctness in language is a matter of usage—the practice of the majority of the best writers.

**23g.** The mechanical make-up and the language are external matters. The execution of the composition deals with internals. Correctness in executing a letter or advertisement is a matter that concerns the correct solution of the

business problem involved (this, of course, involves the use of correct facts and ideas); in other words, correctness of execution is a matter of internals—of the ideas that are used. A business composition, therefore, is correct in execution if it conforms in construction with the technique that has been found to be the best for results and if it is accurate in its ideas and facts.

**24a.** In importance second only to the quality of clearness is the quality of character, which is far rarer than clearness. Character means that the composition is distinctive either because of the writer's personality or because of a certain tone, style, or quality which the writer consciously or unconsciously puts into his composition. Since nine out of ten business compositions are characterless, the composition that has character secures more than ordinary attention. The reader imparts his character to the writing as much as he imparts his personality to a person with whom he talks.

**24b.** Character, however, does not mean eccentricity or oddity in expression. It is not to be secured by posing. Rather is it the personality of the writer injected into his writing and adapted to the reader. Such a writer expresses his idea not by means of mechanical expressions but by means of individual expressions.

**24c.** If the correspondent wants to secure character for his compositions he must first break away from the habit of using the wornout phrases that are common in our commercial correspondence. His next step should be to express his ideas and thoughts in a natural way—simple, direct, and exact. He should write just as he thinks.

*Business English Style*

**25a.** In literary circles the conception of style is that it is the individuality of the writer as shown in his expression. Buffon's famous definition "le style est de l'homme même" (style is of the man himself) is the accepted one generally. Style, in Business English, does not mean simply the expression of the writer's individuality. By far a better definition for style in Business English is: *Style is the writer in the right relation to his subject and his reader.*

**25b.** The writer of Business English should forget about his personal style, about himself, and should think of those readers that he is desirous of reaching. He should find the ideas that will appeal to them, the language that they can understand, and the action that they can be forced to take. The less style in the sense of literary style that the writer has the better. Certainly he should have no mannerisms. He should have sufficient versatility and adaptability to suit his message to the reader, the subject, and the concern—and forget himself.

**26.** Good business writing is simply the encouragement of right habits—the fixing of good habits until they become a part of one's nature and are exercised automatically.

## II. GRAMMAR—GOOD USE IN THE SENTENCE

### *Usage as a Factor in Business English*

**27.** The usage of good writers is stronger than formal grammatical rules, for any language is the product, not of grammatical rules, but of usage. Usage has given to our language its *idioms*, the construction of which, for the most part, cannot be justified by rules of grammar. Several expressions of idiomatic usage are: "I had rather," "He had better," "In this connection."

**28.** In the sentence, "We shall give the order to *whomever* we consider is the best prepared to fill it," the word *whomever*, according to grammatical rule (Rule 50) is incorrectly used for *whoever*, because the subject of the verb *is prepared* in the relative clause, must be put into the nominative case. It is, however, so natural to follow the preposition (in this case *to*) with the objective case that a writer will naturally use *whomever*. The use of *whoever*, although grammatically correct, is unnatural, and *sounds* so unnatural that the reader's attention is directed to it. As a result, the reader is more likely to stop to find out why the writer uses *whoever* instead of *whomever* after *to*, than he is to continue to read and grasp the thought. In other words, the writer by means of his correct use of English has distracted the reader's mind from the important thing, which is not the method of expression, but the thought.

**29.** In the sentence, "Neither he nor I *are* connected with this plan," the verb *are* is incorrectly used, according

to grammar (Rule 33). The sentence should read "Neither he nor I *am* connected with this plan;" but if it were written in that way the reader would be struck by this odd construction, would pause, and would be likely to be distracted from the thought. It is better, therefore, to avoid any unusual grammatical construction, even if correct, that will call attention to its grammar and thereby distract the reader. In such cases, the writer may use a different form to express the same idea, as, "He *is* not connected with this plan; nor *am* I." [Any rule in this book that might cause by its application such distraction is marked with an asterisk (\*).] The writer should write so that the reader will never notice the words or the grammatical construction used, but will see only the idea that is being expressed. The medium of the communication should never attract attention to itself.

### *Grammatical Agreement*

**30.** A verb should agree with its subject, not with its predicate noun.

Wrong: The only asset of the estate *are* twenty-two shares of New York Central.

Right: The only asset of the estate *is* twenty-two shares of New York Central.

Wrong: Safety, marketability, and income *is* the test for bond investment.

Right: Safety, marketability, and income *are* the tests for bond investment.

**31.** A verb agrees with its subject in number.

Wrong: Our latest shipment of automobiles *are* on exhibition at our show-rooms.

(It is a common error to make the verb agree with the noun intervening between it and the subject, instead of with the subject.)

Right: Our latest shipment of automobiles *is* on exhibition at our show-rooms.

Wrong: He *don't* want to receive any more supplies.

Right: He *doesn't* want to receive any more supplies.

**32.** Two or more singular subjects joined by *or* or *nor* take a singular verb.

Wrong: Neither the interest nor the security *interest* me.

Right: Neither the interest nor the security *interests* me.

Wrong: Either the shipping clerk or the railroad *are* at fault.

Right: Either the shipping clerk or the railroad *is* at fault.

**\*33.** Two or more subjects of different number joined by *or* or *nor* take a verb of the number of the last subject.

Wrong: Either they or he *were* interested in this concern.

Right: Either they or he *was* interested in this concern.

Wrong: Neither he nor I *are* very good accountants.

Right: Neither he nor I *am* a very good accountant.

**34.** A singular subject, although followed by a *parenthetical phrase*, takes a singular verb, because words joined to the subject by *with*, *together with*, *in addition to*, or *as well as*, are not a part of the grammatical subject.

Wrong: Your regular order, as well as your special orders of March 8, *have* been shipped.

Right: Your regular order, as well as your special orders of March 8, *has* been shipped.

Wrong: A letter, together with a catalogue, *were* mailed to you.

\* See Rule 29.

Right: A letter, together with a catalogue, *was* mailed to you.

**35.** When the subject, though singular in form is plural in sense, the verb should be plural.

Wrong: Half of the men *has* resigned.

Right: Half of the men *have* resigned.

**36.** When the subject, though plural in form, is singular in sense, the verb should be singular.

Wrong: Ten thousand dollars *are* a large sum to us.

Right: Ten thousand dollars *is* a large sum to us.

**37.** A collective noun, when it refers to the collection as a whole, is singular in sense, and therefore requires a singular verb. When it refers to the individual persons or things of the collection, it is plural and requires a plural verb.

Wrong: The committee as a whole *have* approved the purchase.

Right: The committee as a whole *has* approved the purchase.

Wrong: The Interstate Commerce Commission *have* decided against the railroads.

Right: The Interstate Commerce Commission *has* decided against the railroads.

Wrong: The committee *has* disagreed among itself.

Right: The committee *have* disagreed among themselves.

**38.** With two objects use the comparative degree; with more than two use the superlative.

Wrong: This is the best of the two machines.

Right: This is the better of the two machines.



Wrong: Of our five offers, the second is the better.

Right: Of our five offers, the second is the best.

39. Words like *each*, *either*, *someone*, *somebody*, *anyone*, *everyone*, etc., demand the use of singular verbs and pronouns.

Wrong: Everyone in the office was asked *their* opinion.

Right: Everyone in the office was asked *his* opinion.

Wrong: Each one of my five recommendations *were* granted.

Right: Each one of my five recommendations *was* granted.

### *Dangling Modifiers*

40. A participle should not introduce a sentence unless it logically modifies the subject of the sentence.

Bad: *Replying* to your letter, the matter has been arranged satisfactorily.

Good: *Replying* to your letter, we should like to say that the matter has been arranged satisfactorily.

Bad: *Fitted* to your measure, you will find perfect comfort in this suit.

Good: *Fitted* to your measure, this suit will give you perfect comfort.

Bad: *Having shipped* you the motor boat on March 25, it should now be in your hands.

Good: *Having shipped* you the motor boat on March 25, we think that it should now be in your hands.

41. Do not use a participle in the absolute construction. It does not express the true relation between the subordinate idea and the main idea.

Bad: This cement *having been tested out* for three years, we are backing it with our guarantee.

\* See Rule 29.

Good: As this cement *has been tested out* for three years, we are backing it with our guarantee.

Bad: He declined the offer, it *being* too low.

Good: As the offer *was* too low, he declined it.

Bad: I *being* unfamiliar with this special branch of the work, the firm had to call in outside assistance.

Good: Since I *was* unfamiliar with this special branch of the work, the firm had to call in outside assistance.

**42.** Do not begin a sentence or clause with a gerund phrase unless it logically modifies the subject of the sentence or clause.

Wrong: After *telephoning* to me that I should go ahead with his order, I find his cancelation on my desk.

Right: After he *had telephoned* to me that I should go ahead with his order, I find his cancelation on my desk.

Wrong: In *conferring* with our manager about the new district, he informed me of his plans.

Right: *At a conference* with our manager about the new district, I was informed by him of his plans.

**43.** Do not use an elliptical clause if there is any danger of ambiguity. (An elliptical clause is a clause from which the subject and predicate are omitted: e. g., *when ordering* for *when you are ordering*.)

Wrong: *When four years old*, you will be getting a comfortable income from the orchard.

Right: *When the orchard is four years old*, you will be getting a comfortable income from it.

Wrong: *Although contained in tin*, you will not find the "tinny" taste in these soups.

Right: *Although these soups are contained in tin*, nevertheless, you will not find that they have the "tinny" taste.

*Clearness in Reference*

✓ **44.** Avoid the use of a pronoun, or a pronominal expression, that seems to refer to some word or phrase that has not been expressed.

Wrong: Do not take the life out of your rugs by beating them. Let us do *it* in a more scientific way with our steam process.

Right: Do not take the life out of your rugs by beating them. Let us *clean* them in a more scientific way with our steam process.

Wrong: Without doubt, our new manager is strict, but *it* has not dominated him as *it* did the old manager.

Right: Without doubt, the new manager is strict, but *strictness* has not dominated him as *it* did the old manager.

Note: In the sentence marked "wrong" the pronoun *it* is without an antecedent, because a pronoun may not refer grammatically to an adjective.

Wrong: Your check for \$117.85 was not received until Feb. 4, which means that we shall be unable to allow you the discount.

Right: Your check of \$117.85 was not received until Feb. 4. This fact means that we shall be unable to allow you the discount.

✓ **45.** Avoid the use of a pronoun, or a pronominal expression, the antecedent of which is not immediately seen.

Wrong: The members of the firm have again taken up the matter with the two watchmen, for *they* now think that *they* know how the safe was tampered with.

Right: The members of the firm have again taken up the matter with the two watchmen, *who* think that *they* know how the safe was tampered with.

Wrong: The water is maintained at a certain temperature, *which* continually changes.

Right: The water, *which* continually changes, is maintained at a certain temperature.

✓ **46.** Be particularly careful of the use of pronouns in indirect discourse.

Not clear: Gordon wrote to Mr. Hains that he had received *his* order.

Clear: Gordon wrote to Mr. Hains that he had received *Mr. Hains'* order.

Clear: Gordon wrote to Mr. Hains, "I have received your order."

✗ **47.** Do not use the pronoun until the antecedent has appeared, unless the antecedent immediately follows and is unmistakable.

Wrong: Sales letters are an important part of our selling campaign, but though *they* have steadily watched, and though *they* have studied hard, *sales letter writers* have been unable to lay down hard and fast rules for the success of this work.

Note: In the above passage "They" is entirely vague until near the end of the passage.

**48.** Various ways of ridding the sentence of the ambiguity due to pronouns are: The substitution of equivalent nouns and the unequivocal "the former" and "the latter"; the use of direct quotation in place of the indirect; and the repetition of a word or phrase. Do not be afraid, ever, to repeat the word to which the pronoun refers.

✗ **49.** Avoid the use of a pronoun in referring to a noun subordinate in thought or syntax; either repeat the noun or recast the sentence.

Wrong: In F. B. Scott and Company's new catalogue for 1914 *they* give some remarkably low figures for hydraulic engines.

Right: F. B. Scott and Company, in *their* new catalogue for 1914, give some remarkably low figures for hydraulic engines.

Right: F. B. Scott and Company's new catalogue for 1914 gives some remarkably low figures for hydraulic engines.

### *Errors in Case of Pronouns.*

**\*50.** Be careful of the case of the relative pronoun in the relative clause. Remember that its case is determined by its relation to the verb in the clause.

Wrong: The manager, *whom* I knew could help me, did not listen to me.

Right: The manager, *who* I knew could help me, did not listen to me.

Note: "Who" is the subject of "could help;" "I knew" is merely a parenthetical expression.

Wrong: *Whom* do you think I am?

Right: *Who* do you think I am?

Note: "Who" is a predicate nominative in the same case as "I."

Wrong: Give the position to *whomever* you find is the best prepared.

Right: Give the position to *whoever* you find is the best prepared.

Note: "Whoever" is the subject of the verb "is"; not the object of the preposition "to." The object of "to" is the entire clause "whoever you find is the best prepared."

Wrong: You should take *whomever* can do this kind of work.

Right: You should take *whoever* can do this kind of work.

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\* See Rule 29.

Note: "Whoever" is the subject of "can do"; not the object of "take." The object of "take" is the entire clause "whoever can do this kind of work."

**51.** A predicate substantive that completes a finite verb is put into the nominative case.

Right: It was *I* who signed the order.

Right: The contracting parties are *we*, *they*, and *she*.

Right: Was it *they* to whom you have telegraphed?

Right: What would you have done, if you were *I*?

**52.** The subject of an infinitive should be in the objective case.

Right: Give the position to *whomever* you find *to be* the best prepared.

Note: "Whomever" is the subject of "to be."

**53.** The predicate substantive that completes an infinitive should be put into the objective case.

Right: We believe the consignee to be *him*.

Note: "Him" is the predicate substantive that completes the infinitive "to be."

**54.** The object of a verb or of a preposition should be in the objective case.

Right: He meant particularly you and *me*.

Right: *Whom* did you name?

Right: Remember, this is between you and *me*.

**55.** An appositive should be in the same case as the noun with which it is in apposition.

Right: We all should meet at the hotel, *you*, *he*, and *she*.

Right: He cancelled agreements with the two of us—  
Frank Horn and *me*.

Note: "*You*, *he*, and *she*" are in apposition with "we," which is in the nominative case; therefore, *you*, *he*, and *she* should

be in the nominative case. "Frank Horn and *me*" are in apposition with "two," which is in the objective case; therefore, "Frank Horn and *me*" should be in the objective case.

**56.** Since *than* and *as* are conjunctions, not prepositions, the substantive which follows takes its case from its relation to the verb in the subordinate clause introduced by *than* or *as*.

Wrong: He has more influence than *me*.

Right: He has more influence than *I*.

("Than I" = "than I have.")

Right: He is wealthier than *I*.

("Than I" = "than I am.")

Right: Frank can sell as well as *I*.

("As I" = "as I can sell.")

Right: He would consult me more quickly than *him*.

("Than him" = "than he would consult him.")

### Possessives

The possessive case is used to show possession or ownership.

**57a.** Singular nouns form their possessive by the addition of an apostrophe and *s* (*'s*) to the nominative case.

Examples: The *company's* policy

The *secretary's* report

Note: Even though a noun ends in *s*, its possessive singular is formed in the usual way by the addition of an apostrophe and *s* (*'s*), unless the repetition of the *s*-sound makes the word difficult to pronounce or unpleasant in sound. Hence we say "*Lewis's* salary," "*Jones's* account"; but "for *goodness's* sake," "*Ulysses's* sales territory."

**57b.** Plural nouns that end in *s* form their possessive case by the addition of an apostrophe alone (*'*).

Examples: Youths' suits

Ladies' umbrellas

Boys' blouses

**57c.** Plural nouns that do not end in *s* form their possessive by the addition of apostrophe and *s* ('*s*).

Examples: Men's shoes  
Children's clothing  
Women's cloaks

**57d.** A compound noun or noun phrase forms its possessive by the addition of an apostrophe and *s* ('*s*) to the last word only.

Examples: The *Secretary-treasurer's* signature  
The *Palace Theater's* new show

Note: When two or more nouns are used so that *joint* possession is indicated, the sign of the possessive ('*s*) is added to the last only.

Examples: *Lord & Taylor's* windows  
*Rogers Peet Company's* new store  
John and George's new houses (This expression indicates that John and George are *joint owners* of the new houses)

Note: But if *separate* possession is indicated, the sign of the possessive follows each name.

Examples: *John's and George's* new houses (This expression indicates that both John and George *separately* own new houses)  
*Wanamaker's and Gimbel's* new advertising campaigns

**57e.** In the case of nouns that are in apposition, the possessive is indicated in various ways.

Examples: At Pach's, the photographer  
At Pach's, the photographer's

**57f.** In using the equivalent for the possessive, beware of doubtful meaning.



Examples: Hatred of *Johnson* brought on the trouble  
*Johnson's* hatred brought on the trouble  
 The loss of *their star salesman* depressed the firm  
*Their star salesman's* loss depressed the firm

Note: On close examination the reader will see that there is a difference in meaning between the sentences given above.

**57g.** The double possessive has become correct through usage.

Examples: That check of Thompson's  
 Those bonds of mine

**57h.** The possessive adjectives *theirs, ours, yours, his, hers, its* should not be written with an apostrophe.

Wrong: *It's, her's, your's*

**57i.** The possessive case ordinarily is used to show real ownership and, accordingly, is usually applied only to things which have the ability to possess; i. e., things that are really alive. Thus we say "the manager's check-book" and "the cover of the check-book." As a rule, however, we do not usually say "the check-book's cover," or "the chair's polish." Such expressions as "the *day's* work," "the *week's* salary," "a three *hours'* job," "a two *years'* contract," are correct, because of common usage.

**58.** The genitive (possessive) case of the noun or pronoun should be used before the verbal noun ending in "ing."

Wrong: We have just been informed of *him* being successful.

Right: We have just been informed of *his* being successful.

Wrong: This can be done without *any one* noticing it.

Right: This can be done without *any one's* noticing it.

*Adjectives and Adverbs*

**59.** After *look, sound, taste, smell, feel*, and similar verbs, and in such expressions as, *We stand firm, We stand firmly*, an adjective is used to describe the subject. To modify the verb, an adverb should be used.

Right: These vases look *good*.

(Not, "look well.")

Right: Pinaud's perfume smells *exquisite*.

(Not, "smells exquisitely.")

Right: How *good* the Victrola sounds on the porch!

(Not, "sounds well.")

Right: I feel *well*.

("Well" is an adjective in this use.)

Right: It feels *good* to get back to my office.

Right: We stand *firm* in our conviction of our rights.

Right: We stand *firmly* by our decision.

Right: The bonds you mailed reached us *safe*.

Right: He got across *safe*.

Note: As a rule the adjective is used whenever some form of the verb *to be* or *to seem* may be used; when the adverb is used, no such substitution can be made.

**60.** In such expressions as *He rolled it tight, He rolled it tightly, We kept it safe, We kept it safely*, the modifier should be an adjective if it designates the condition of the object. If it designates the manner of action of the verb, the modifier should be an adverb.

Right: He rolled it *tight*.

(*Tight* designates the condition of the object.)

Right: He rolled it *tightly*.

(*Tightly* designates the manner of rolling.)

Right: We kept it *safe*.

(*Safe* designates the condition of the object.)

Right: We kept it *safely*.

(*Safely* designates the manner of keeping.)

*Questions of Tense*

**61.** The tense of a verb should correctly express the time referred to. Obscurity results when an incorrect tense of a verb is used, for the reader takes a meaning from the sentence different from that which the writer tried to convey. Most errors in the use of tense are violations of some one of the following principles:

✓ **62.** Principal verbs referring to the same time throughout a passage should be in the same tense.

Wrong: We recently *wrote* to Mr. Way at the factory in reference to the delay. In reply he *has expressed* his regret and *writes* further that as far as he *can see*, your material *will be delayed* a week.

Right: We recently *wrote* to Mr. Way at the factory in reference to the delay. In reply he *expressed* his regret and *wrote* further that as far as he *could see*, the material *would be delayed* a week.

**63.** The perfect indicative represents the action either as now completed or as begun in the past but continuing to the future; as, "I *have sold* your bonds" (so that I no longer have them); "I *have known* him for years" (I still know him).

✓ **64.** The tense of the verb in a dependent clause varies with the tense of the principal verb.

Right: I *know* that you *will realize* our position in this matter.

Right: I *knew* that you *would realize* our position in this matter.

Right: We *have sent* you the entire order, so that you *may have* a complete display.

Right: We *had sent* you the entire order, so that you *might have* a complete display.

Right: He *will be* greatly *pleased* if he *gets* this order.

Right: He *would be* greatly *pleased* if he *got* this order.

Right: He *would have been* greatly *pleased* if he *had got* this order.

**65.** Present facts and unchangeable truths, however, should be expressed in the present tense, regardless of the tense of the principal verb.

Right: He explained in his report that this chemical *is composed* of three things.

(Not, *was composed*.)

Right: We learned from the time table that the distance between the two cities *is* seventy-four miles.

(Not, *was*.)

**66.** The perfect infinitive is used to denote action prior to that of the governing verb; otherwise, use the present infinitive. Be careful to see that the infinitives and conditional verb phrases are not incorrectly attracted into the perfect tense.

Wrong: He meant *to have written* yesterday.

Right: He meant *to write* yesterday.

Wrong: He expected *to have seen* you tomorrow.

Right: He expected *to see* you tomorrow.

Right: He was reported *to have sold* out.

Right: He is known *to have had* financial difficulties.

Note: *Ought, need, must, and should* (in the sense of *ought*) have no distinctive form to denote past time. Present time is denoted by putting the complementary infinitive into the present tense; past time is denoted by putting the complementary infinitive into the perfect tense, as, "You *ought to write*," "You *ought to have written*," "You *should be careful*," "You *should have been careful*."

**67.** A verb in the dependent clause within a conditional clause should be in the present tense unless it denotes action prior to that of the governing verb.

Wrong: The letter would never have left my hands if I *had realized* the damage that it *would have done*.

Right: The letter would never have left my hands if I *had realized* the danger that it *would do*.

Right: The letter would never have left my hands if I *had known* what *had happened* already.

**68.** The present participle should not be used to represent an action that is not of the same time as that of the governing verb.

Wrong: *Leaving* here on May 25, he reached Providence on May 28.

Right: He left here on May 25 and reached Providence on May 28.

Wrong: He sailed for Liverpool on June 8, *arriving* there on the 16th.

Right: He sailed for Liverpool on June 8 and *arrived* there on the 16th.

**69.** The use of *shall* and *will* is rather confusing to the average writer. When the writer desires to express simple futurity or expectation without expressing willingness, desire, or determination on the part of the writer, he should use the following formula:

I shall	We shall
You will	You will
He will	They will

Wrong: I *will* be glad to hear from you.

Right: I *shall* be glad to hear from you.

(It is absurd for one to say that one is determined to be glad to hear from a man.)

Right: They *will* be glad to receive your letter.

**70.** When the writer desires to express determination, desire, or willingness he should use the following formula: (These forms imply that the matter is within the control of the speaker or writer.)

I will	We will
You shall	You shall
He shall	They shall

I certainly *will* not pay this bill (determination).

He *shall* pay for that bill if I have anything to do with it (determination).

You *shall* stay out of this territory, even though I have to get out an injunction.

"It *shall* rain to-morrow" is nonsense, as it means that the speaker or writer is determined to have it rain to-morrow.

**71.** In questions, the use of *shall* and *will* is as follows:

a. When the subject is in the first person, *shall* is always used, except in repeating a question addressed to the speaker.

Right: Will I let you have that discount? Why surely I will.

Right: *Shall* we continue to mail the information as it comes in?

Right: *Shall* I return the shipment?

b. When the subject is in the second or third person, use the form that will be used in the answer.

*Shall* you arrive on the 8:20 train? (The answer expected is: "I *shall* arrive" or "I *shall not* arrive on the 8:20 train"; therefore *shall* ought to be used in the question.)

*Will* he come, do you suppose? (The answer expected is: "He *will* come" or "He *will* not come," therefore *will* ought to be used in the question.)

*Will* you lend me the money? (The answer expected is: "I *will*" or "I *will* not lend you the money"; therefore *will* ought to be used in the question.)

**72.** In indirect discourse, use the form that would properly be used in the direct quotation.

Right: He wrote in his letter that he *should* probably arrive on the 8:20 train.

Note: In the letter he actually wrote: "I *shall* probably arrive on the 8:20 train"; therefore *shall* (an inflectional form of *should*) ought to be used in the direct quotation.

Right: You telegraphed that you *would* grant me the favor.

Note: On the telegraph blank what was actually written was: "I *will* (showing willingness on the part of the writer) grant you the favor"; hence *would* (an inflectional form of *will*) ought to be used in the direct quotation.

**73.** In conditional clauses, such as those introduced by *if* or *whether*, *shall* is used to express futurity in all persons.

If he *shall* mail me the card, I shall be glad to send him further examples (simple futurity).

If he *should* leave the firm, we should probably find others without positions (simple futurity).

**74.** *Should* and *would*, the preterite (imperfect) forms of *shall* and *will*, are used in the same connection and sense as *shall* and *will*. Other uses of *should* and *would* follow.

a. *Would* may be used to express frequentative action.

Right: He *would* pace the floor of his office, hour after hour.

b. *Would* is also used to express a wish.

Right: I *would* that I could help you in your difficulty.

**75.** *Should* is frequently used to express moral obligation.

Right: You should do your duty no matter what it costs.

### *General Errors*

**76.** Do not use a *when* or *where* clause in place of a predicate noun; use a noun with modifiers.

Wrong: Insolvency is where a firm cannot meet its bills.

Right: Insolvency is the condition of a firm which cannot meet its bills.

**77.** Do not use a sentence (except a quoted sentence) as the subject of *is* or *was*.

Wrong: War was declared in Europe is why the Stock Exchange closed.

Right: The Stock Exchange closed because war was declared in Europe.

**78.** Do not use a double negative.

Wrong: We don't send nothing unless it is paid for in advance.

Right: We send nothing unless it is paid for in advance.

Wrong: I don't know nothing about your offer.

Right: I know nothing about your offer.

**79.** *Hardly*, *scarcely*, *only*, and *but* (in the sense of *only*) are often incorrectly used with a negative.

Wrong: If you were to search for many years you couldn't *hardly* find a safer investment.

Right: If you were to search for many years you could *hardly* find a safer investment.



Wrong: At the time, we couldn't *scarcely* figure out how he stood.

Right: At the time, we could *scarcely* figure out how he stood.

Wrong: On account of the high cost, we are not able to give this *only* to our regular customers.

Right: On account of the high cost, we are able to give this *only* to our regular customers.

Wrong: We haven't *but* one sample left.

Right: We have *but* one sample left.

**80.** After comparatives accompanied by *than*, the words *any* and *all* should be followed by *other* or *else*.

Wrong: This tobacco is better *than any* on the market.

(The construction used here is illogical because it means that the tobacco mentioned is better than itself.)

Right: The tobacco is better *than any other* tobacco on the market.

Wrong: We would rather do business with you *than with anyone*.

Right: We would rather do business with you *than with anyone else*.

**81.** Be careful to restrict the use of *any* and *all* by *other* or *else*.

Wrong: A pleasant feature of these straw hats, not to be found in *any* make, is the unique transparent lining.

Right: A pleasant feature of these straw hats, not to be found in *any other* make, is the unique transparent lining.

Wrong: Woven in selected camel's hair in undyed effects, this rug has a wearing quality lacking in *all* rugs.

Right: Woven in selected camel's hair in undyed effects, this rug has a wearing quality lacking in *all other* rugs.

### III. SENTENCE STRUCTURE

#### *Length*

**82.** The sentence is the simplest unit of expression, but upon its use depends the effectiveness of the thought. The sentence may be defined as a group of words grammatically united to express a complete thought or idea. A group of words, such as "Circulation exceeding 200,000 copies." is not a sentence despite the fact that it begins with a capital letter and ends with a period. There is no complete thought contained therein.

**83.** Sentence length is an important consideration in business English, since, to get the best results, the length must be arbitrarily adapted to the reader and to the type of letter. Short sentences should be used in writing to business men, to farmers, and, in general, to progressive people and to uneducated people. By a short sentence we mean one that contains less than fifteen words.

**84.** A writer sometimes gives his letters a distinctive character by the use throughout of sentences of a given length—usually short sentences. This practice is not deserving of encouragement. It is desirable, however, to avoid the use of sentences of a length that may interfere with the accomplishment of the purpose of the letter.

**85.** In sales letters, letters of application, and collection letters, which try to arouse the reader to action, short, incisive sentences are most likely to be used.

**86.** Long sentences are suitable in writing to teachers, women, professional men, and in general, to educated people and to conservative people. By a long sentence we mean one that contains more than twenty-five words.

**87.** In letters, such as answers to complaints, letters refusing credit, and letters adjusting differences, which try to soothe the reader who is aroused, long, smooth sentences are most effective.

✓ *Kinds of Sentences*

✓ **88.** The three types of sentences, *loose*, *periodic*, and *balanced*, should be used.

**89.** The loose sentence is a sentence so constructed that it may be closed at two or more places and yet make complete sense.

Example: We have made you concession after concession and have tried to keep you a satisfied customer, but your last demand is too much.

(The sentence can be closed after the words "concession" and "customer.")

**90.** The periodic sentence holds the complete thought in suspense until the end of the sentence.

Examples: One of the foundation stones upon which the Delco success has been built is the Delco Ignition.

From whatever viewpoint true efficiency is judged, Firestone Non-Skids furnish the full answer.

**91.** The balanced sentence is made up of members similar in form but often contrasted in meaning.

Examples: Get the Welch habit; it's one that can't get you.

They don't come back so often, but they do come back for more.

If it isn't an Eastman, it isn't a Kodak.

We couldn't improve the powder; so we improved the box.

### *The Principles of Construction*

**92.** In business letter writing and in all other forms of business composition, there are certain principles of construction called *Unity*, *Coherence*, and *Emphasis*, which the writer must apply to his constructive work of writing, if he desires to make his message effective. If his message is constructed in accordance with these principles, it is likely to be clear and effective. The applications of these three principles to sentence structure are given below.

### *Unity in the Sentence*

**93.** Unity is the selective principle which requires that the sentence contain but one central idea. Unity requires also that closely related thoughts should not be improperly scattered among several sentences.

**94.** Two or more statements that have no close connection with one another should not be embodied in one sentence.

Bad: We should like to call your attention to our facilities for this work, and you will find that we live up to our word.

Good: We should like to call your attention to our facilities for this work. You will find that we live up to our word.

Bad: This laundry was named for President Lincoln and has a reputation for first-class work.

Better: This laundry was named for President Lincoln. It has a reputation for first-class work.

✓ **95.** It is possible, sometimes, to correct a sentence made up of two statements lacking connection with each other by expressing a connection between the statements.

Bad: The entire load comes on the motor suddenly, and we expect to put a heavy fly-wheel on the motor shaft to carry it over these points of excessive load.

Good: Since the entire load comes on the motor suddenly, we expect to put a heavy fly-wheel on the motor shaft to carry it over these points of excessive load.

Bad: Our packer has signed the check for having enclosed the lace, and we should like you to examine carefully the contents of the package.

Good: As our packer has signed the check for having enclosed the lace, we should like you to examine carefully the contents of the package.

✓ **96.** Long compound sentences consisting of many statements connected with *and*'s and *but*'s are to be avoided.

Bad: The goods were shipped to you on June 15, and we can prove this fact by the carbon duplicate, but, nevertheless, we have put on a tracer and in all likelihood, therefore, you will soon receive the goods.

Good: The goods were shipped to you on June 15. We can prove this fact by the carbon duplicate. We have, nevertheless, put on a tracer, and in all likelihood, therefore, you will soon receive the goods.

**97.** Avoid excessively long sentences. Although such sentences are not necessarily objectionable, they are usually

incapable of making a single definite impression upon the reader's mind. They are, moreover, likely to have serious structural faults, the most important of which is the lack of unity.

**98.** Long sentences are common in business letters, because, in dictating, one is easily led from one idea to another until he has strung together a large number of them.

x ✓ **99.** Do not change the point of view unnecessarily.

Bad: *I* have just finished writing my report, and *it* will be sent to you to-morrow.

Good: *I* have just finished writing my report, and will send it to you to-morrow.

Bad: In order to test this watch, it has been subjected to the extremes of heat and cold. (The point of view at the beginning is that of the persons who have made the test. The point of view after the comma is that of the object that has been tested.)

Good: In order to test this watch, we have subjected it to the extremes of heat and cold. (The point of view throughout is that of the persons who have tested the watch.)

Bad: Upon releasing the backward pressure, the wheel coasts on with entire freedom.

Good: After the backward pressure has been released, the wheel coasts on with entire freedom.

✓ **100.** Unite into one sentence, phrases, clauses, and sentences that are closely and logically connected with one another in thought.

Bad: Our machine will handle 250 cards per minute. While no other machine can handle even 150.

Good: Our machine will handle 250 cards per minute, whereas no other machine can handle even 150.

Bad: Our accountant has already sent us two letters about your case. Also one report.

Good: Our accountant has already sent us two letters and one report about your case.

Bad: We have just received your telegram. It informs us of the non-arrival of your desk.

Good: We have just received your telegram, which informs us of the non-arrival of your desk.

**101.** Do not write two unrelated independent clauses following each other, with only a comma for separation. Either make two sentences or connect them with a conjunction. (This is sometimes called the "comma" fault.)

Bad: There are only a few of these suits left, we are selling them at a great reduction.

Good: There are only a few of these suits left. We are selling them at a great reduction. *Or*

As we have only a few of these suits left, we are selling them at a great reduction.

### *Coherence*

**102.** Coherence is the principle which requires the arrangement and construction of the sentence to be clear, logical, and free from ambiguity.

✓**103.** Each modifier should be so placed that the reader sees unmistakably to what word or group of words it refers.

Not clear: Inform my secretary that I should like to know why he was absent if he is there.

Clear: Inform my secretary, if he is there, that I should like to know why he was absent.

Not clear: This company sold all of its stock just before it went into bankruptcy at greatly reduced figures.

Clear: This company, just before it went into bankruptcy, sold all of its stock at greatly reduced figures.

✓\*104. Do not place an adverb or a phrase between the infinitive and its sign *to*. (This is called the split infinitive.)

Bad: The firm stands ready *to quickly deliver* the article at any time.

Good: The firm stands ready *to deliver quickly* the article at any time.

Bad: In order *to fully assure* you of our standing, we are mailing our latest report.

Good: In order *fully to assure* you of our standing, we are mailing our latest report.

✓✓105. Special care should be taken to place adverbs as close as possible to the words they modify.

Bad: This company can't *even* handle its present orders.

Good: This company can't handle *even* its present orders.

Bad: We *only* have ten shares of this stock.

Good: We have *only* ten shares of this stock. (See **Only**.)

✓106. Correlatives should be placed next to the expressions they are meant to connect.

Bad: Insiders in sugar *not only* continue to take stock, *but also* to create a great demand for it.

Good: Insiders in sugar continue *not only* to take stock, *but also* to create a great demand for it.

Bad: We *neither* have received your letter *nor* your telegram.

Good: We have received *neither* your letter *nor* your telegram.

107. The use of the participle in the absolute construction is to be avoided, because it does not express the exact relation between the two ideas. (Compare with Rule 41.)

\* See Rule 29.



Bad: Early copy means early proof, *avoiding* the necessity for hasty revision.

Good: Since early copy means early proof, the necessity for hasty revision *is avoided*.

Bad: Advertisements of 1500 lines or more will be placed on a separate page, the remainder of the page *containing* interesting news matter.

Good: Advertisements of 1500 lines or more will be placed on a separate page. The remainder of this page *will contain* interesting news matter.

Bad: All our available supply *having been lost* in the fire, we are unable to fill your order.

Good: Since all our available supply *has been lost* in the fire, we are unable to fill your order.

Bad: The goods *having arrived*, we quickly disposed of them.

Good: After the goods *had arrived*, we quickly disposed of them.

### 108. Avoid a loose arrangement of relative clauses.

Bad: We had on hand a good stock, which we used to meet the demand at this time, *which was the rush season*.

Good: We had on hand a good stock, which we used to meet the demand *of the rush season*.

### ✓109. Avoid long, incoherent, ill-connected sentences.

Bad: We also found that by manufacturing the boats in large quantities and building them all just alike, we could reduce the cost and be able to furnish a high-grade boat at a price that would be within the reach of the ordinary purchaser and thus enable us to sell boats in large quantities so that we could accept a small profit on each boat and still make a good profit on the total investment.

Good: We also found that by manufacturing the boats in large quantities and by building them all just alike we

could reduce the cost and be able to furnish a high-grade boat at a price that would be within the reach of the ordinary purchaser. In this way we should be enabled to sell boats in large quantities so that we could accept a small profit on each boat and still make a good profit on the total investment.

**110.** Avoid the placing of a clause so that the verb following it is incorrectly connected with the verb of the clause.

Bad: He entered my office just as the price of the stock jumped two points and walked nervously about the room.

Good: Just as the price of the stock jumped two points, he entered my office and walked nervously about the room.

**111.** The parts of the sentence should be arranged so that the sentence reads smoothly and clearly. Parenthetical expressions are especially likely to injure the smoothness of the sentence.

Bad: Our sales manager, a man considered to be a crackerjack salesman, contrary to our wishes, started the new campaign.

Good: Our sales manager, who is considered to be a crackerjack salesman, started this new campaign contrary to our wishes.

Bad: We are enclosing our latest catalogue, which we know will be of interest to retailers, dealing with our newest models.

Good: We are enclosing our latest catalogue dealing with our newest models which will be of interest to retailers.

### *Omissions*

**112.** A serious fault in business correspondence is the omission of words needed to complete the grammatical con-

struction of the sentence. This fault arises from haste, or from an attempt at conciseness. The result is that the reader cannot so easily follow the thought of the writer.

**113.** Parts of verbs which are needed to complete the grammatical construction, and which cannot be supplied from the preceding part of the sentence, should not be omitted.

Bad: As you requested, the stock certificate was registered and the bonds sent.

Good: As you requested, the stock certificate was registered and the bonds *were* sent.

Bad: The letter never has and never will be sent.

Good: The letter never has *been* and never will be sent.

**114.** Do not make one form of the verb *be* serve both as a principal and as an auxiliary verb.

Bad: His report was convincing and appreciated by the directors.

Good: His report was convincing and *was* appreciated by the directors.

Bad: The pamphlet was made up in good form and interesting.

Good: The pamphlet was made up in good form and *was* interesting.

**115.** Principal verbs should not be supplied from one part of the sentence to another if the same form is not grammatically correct in both parts. The correct form should be written for each part.

Bad: He ran such an office as only the true executive can.

Good: He ran such an office as only the true executive can *run*.

Bad: Our house did what many others have and are doing.

Good: Our house did what many others have *done* and are doing.

**116.** Two expressions of comparison, one of which is an adjective preceded by *as*, and the other, an adjective in the comparative degree, should not both be completed by a single *as* clause or a single *than* clause, unless that clause immediately follows the expression of comparison that stands first in the sentence.

Bad: This price is as good if not better than any other you can get.

Good: This price is as good as any other you can get, if not better.

Bad: Our twenty-pound paper is cheaper and just as good as Amco.

Good: Our twenty-pound paper is cheaper than Amco and just as good.

**117.** A single modifying clause or phrase should not limit two sentence elements unless that modifier is idiomatically adapted to both.

Bad: Frank Jones will make a good employee, because of the experience and the good work he has done.

Good: Frank Jones will make a good employee, because of the experience *he has had* and the good work he has done.

Bad: This office has no connection or knowledge of the house you mentioned.

Good: This office has no connection *with* or knowledge of the house you mentioned.

(This sentence is correct, but is awkward; the following one is better.)

This office has no connection *with* the house you mentioned and no knowledge of it.

**118.** Two incomplete members of a sentence, one requiring a single noun to complete it, and the other a plural

noun, should not both be completed by one noun unless that noun immediately follows the incomplete member standing first in the sentence.

Bad: This bond is one of the safest, if not the safest bond, for the investor.

Good: This bond is one of the safest *bonds* for the investor, if not the safest.

Bad: Consent to this and all future issues must be given by the Public Service Commission.

Good: Consent to this issue and to all future issues must be given by the Public Service Commission.

**119.** The subject of the sentence, when in the first person, should not be omitted.

Bad: Have received your letter of March 16.

Good: *I* have received your letter of March 16.

Bad: Shall let you know after I have seen the secretary.

Good: *I* shall let you know after I have seen the secretary.

**120.** The articles *a*, *an*, and *the* should not be omitted.

Bad: We have sent bill and goods to home address of firm.

Good: We have sent *the* bill and *the* goods to *the* home address of *the* firm.

Bad: Wanted—A woman who understands little about cooking, to take charge of small lunch room.

Good: Wanted—A woman who understands *a* little about cooking, to take charge of small lunch room.

**\*121.** Subordinating conjunctions should not be omitted.

Bad: He wrote me he had sent the order.

Good: He wrote me *that* he had sent the order.

**\*122.** Do not omit prepositions.

Bad: The following day we received your check.

Good: *On* the following day we received your check.

\* See Rule 29.

Bad: This announcement was published the 9th of May.

Good: This announcement was published *on* the 9th of May.

Bad: All bids will be opened Saturday.

Good: All bids will be opened *on* Saturday.

**123.** Do not leave comparisons incomplete.

Bad: The make-up of the pamphlet marked "2" is better.

Good: The make-up of the pamphlet marked "2" is better *than that* of the pamphlet *marked "1."*

*Coördination and Subordination*

**124.** Do not join a relative clause to the principal clause by *and* or *but*.

Bad: The chief told me about the favor you had done *and* which I want to thank you for.

Good: The chief told me about the favor you had done, which I want to thank you for.

Bad: One of the best salesmen on the staff is John Ripley of New York City, *and* who is only twenty-six years of age.

Good: One of the best salesmen on the staff is John Ripley of New York City, who is only twenty-six years of age.

Good: He is a man in whom we can trust *and* from whom we can expect conscientious work. (In this sentence one relative clause is connected with another relative clause.)

**125.** Do not join one idea to a preceding idea by *and*, *but*, or *or*, unless it is logically coördinate. Subordinate ideas should be put into subordinate grammatical forms.

Bad: The shortage has not been made good by the railroad, *and* we must ask you to make it good.

Good: *As* the shortage has not been made good by the railroad, we must ask you to make it good.

Bad: Your check was received two days late, *but* we cannot allow you the discount.

Good: *As* your check was received two days late, we cannot allow you the discount.

126. Do not join coordinate verbs in a sentence with the adverbs *so*, *then*, or *also*.

Bad: The reproducing point is a genuine diamond, *so* it will not wear out.

Good: The reproducing point is a genuine diamond *and so* will not wear out.

Bad: The varnish is applied with a brush, *then* rubbed in.

Good: The varnish is applied with a brush *and then* rubbed in.

Bad: You will be delighted with the big showing of spring fabrics, *also* will be pleased with our new array of hats.

Good: You will be delighted with the big showing of spring fabrics *and also* will be pleased with our new array of hats.

127. Two consecutive statements should not both be introduced by *but* or *for*.

Bad: His explanation of the cost system used was understood by most of us, *but* several did not understand certain details, *but* they did not say anything.

Good: His explanation of the cost system used, was understood by most of us; several did not understand certain details, *but* they did not say anything. *Or*, His explanation of the cost system used, was understood by most of us. Several did not understand certain details, *but* they did not say anything.

Bad: Such a watch becomes a true companion, *for* it never fails you, *for* it keeps time to the infallible second.

Good: Such a watch becomes a true companion; it never fails you, *for* it keeps time to the infallible second. *Or*, Such a watch becomes a true companion. It never fails you, *for* it keeps time to the infallible second.

**128.** Avoid the use of the adverb *so* for the purpose of compounding sentences.

Bad: We understood that you were interested in our trip, *so* we sent you our pamphlet and circulars.

Correct (but not preferable): We understood that you were interested in our trip; *so* we sent you our pamphlet and circulars.

Preferable: *As* we understood that you were interested in our trip, we sent you our pamphlet and circulars.

**129.** Avoid the "House That Jack Built" style of subordination: i. e., do not use a series of similar clauses or a series of similar phrases in such a construction that the second depends on the first, the third on the second, and so on.

Bad: On page 15 you will see the drawings that have been made of this engine which is the marvel of expert engineers.

Good: On page 15 you will see the drawings of this engine that is the marvel of expert engineers.

Bad: The tobacco is treated by a patented process so that the bite is taken out, so that smoking is once more a pleasure to those smokers that have tender tongues.

Good: The tobacco is treated by a patented process, so that the bite is taken out. Smoking is thereby once more made a pleasure to those smokers that have tender tongues.

**130.** The principal clause of a complex sentence should contain the most important statement; the subordinate clause should contain the secondary or qualifying statement. Be especially careful of the use of a *when* clause.

Bad: We were shipping their order *when* news came that they had filed a petition in bankruptcy.

Good: *When* we were shipping their order, news came that they had filed a petition in bankruptcy.



Bad: The monthly quota had almost been reached *when* all at once sales fell off in every place.

Good: The monthly quota had almost been reached. All at once sales fell off in every place.

### Parallelism

✓ **131.** Parallel ideas in a sentence should be put, as a rule, in parallel construction. If one idea is expressed by an infinitive, the other also should be so expressed; if one is a relative clause, the other should be; and so on.

Bad: I have written to him *to send* me his report and *that he should also leave* immediately for Chicago.

Note: The infinitive construction "to send" and the subordinate clause construction "that he should" are not in parallel form. This makes the sentence awkward.

Good: I have written to him *to send* me his report and also *to leave* immediately for Chicago. *Or,*

I have written to him *that he should send* me his report and *that he should also leave* immediately for Chicago.

Bad: We wrote personal letters to customers *who had* formerly done business with us and *now they were* with our competitors.

Good: We wrote personal letters to customers *who had* formerly done business with us and *who were* now with our competitors.

Bad: The capital necessary *to start* the business and *for running* it several years is now at our disposal.

Good: The capital necessary *to start* the business and *to run* it for several years is now at our disposal.

### Emphasis

**132.** The principle of emphasis is of special importance in business English, for from its correct application come many of the rhetorical effects that make strong impressions on the reader. It is one means of making a sentence forceful.

**133.** Emphasis results from arrangement. It requires that the sentence be so arranged that the principal idea is brought into prominence and that the minor details are subordinated. It requires also that the important idea in the sentence be so presented that its importance cannot but be felt.

**134.** Only when particular stress is required need the principle of emphasis be applied.

✓**135.** Avoid a weak beginning in an important sentence.

Unemphatic: In other words, the American business man has been playing the game alone.

Emphatic: The American business man, in other words, has been playing the game alone.

Unemphatic: Therefore, you should select your filing equipment for what it will do.

Emphatic: You should therefore select your filing equipment for what it will do.

Unemphatic: Moreover, no saving of a few cents can balance what you lose in attention through the use of inferior paper.

Emphatic: No saving of a few cents, moreover, can balance what you lose in attention through the use of inferior paper.

✓**136.** Avoid a weak ending in an important sentence.

Unemphatic: We want to inform you that you have not sent in your check for some reason or other.

Emphatic: We want to inform you that for some reason or other you have not sent in your check.

Unemphatic: It would be well for you to anticipate your needs now, if your stock is not complete for the holiday season.

Emphatic: If your stock is not complete for the holiday season, it would be well for you to anticipate your needs now.

Unemphatic: A filing system is an asset to a business, it being a time-saver.

Emphatic: A filing system is an asset to a business, for it is a time-saver.

Emphatic: Pure white lead and pure linseed oil make reliable paints—of any tint—and they last.

**137.** A change from the usual order often makes a great change in emphasis; but be sure that awkwardness does not result.

Unemphatic: Now is the time to mail the enclosed card.

Emphatic: The time to mail the enclosed card is now.

Unemphatic: Service is what you need now.

Emphatic: What you need now is service.

Unemphatic: Reform right now if you have been making the mistake of looking upon these things as trifles.

Emphatic: If you have been making the mistake of looking upon these things as trifles, reform right now.

**138.** A principle of climax now extensively used in advertising and sales-letter writing is known as "Herd's Principle." This principle makes use of a series of three words, three phrases, or three clauses arranged according to length, the shortest first and the longest last, or with the longest first and the shortest last. These arrangements will secure a cumulative climax. A series of four members is likely to be too long sustained and to drag. Examples:

With its tasty zest, its inviting fragrance and natural color, and its recognized wholesome and nourishing after effects—there is indeed no soup like it.

For the best cleanser, for an aid to a clear complexion, for something that is more than mere soap—there is only one choice—PALMOLIVE.

Besides its remarkable strength, besides its perfect writing and erasing qualities, and besides its ability to stand the severest test to which a business paper can be put—Blank Linen Paper has a remarkably low price.

- ✓ **139.** To produce a climax, arrange words, phrases, or clauses according to their importance, with the most important last.

Emphatic: To these handy cabinets the business world is indebted for thousands of hours saved, for thousands of mistakes prevented, and for an increase in efficiency that can never be measured.

Emphatic: Wherever packing costs must be considered, wherever transportation charges are an item, wherever safety of goods in transit must be assured—the fibre-board box is replacing the wooden box.

Emphatic: The Rauch & Lang automobile means a silence that is manifest, a power economy hitherto unknown, and a driving simplicity that appeals to the most sensitive woman.

Emphatic: With my emergency automobiles, with my expert electricians, with a factory and supply rooms at my disposal—I can give you fast service and, what is as important—good work.

- 140.** Avoid all words that add nothing to the thought.

Verbose: In regard to the offer that you made me, I should like to inform you that I will accept it.

Concise: I accept your offer.

- 141.** Avoid the use of *there are* and *there is* in beginning an emphatic sentence.

Unemphatic: There are two special designs featured in E. & W. shirts.

Emphatic: In E. & W. shirts, two special designs are featured.

Unemphatic: There are only five parts to this machine.

Emphatic: This machine has only five parts.

**142.** Unless emphasis is sought, do not strain to keep the often-prescribed rule that no sentence should end with a preposition.

Correct: I left the receipt to be called for.

Correct: His side of the story is the only side I know of.

Correct: We were glad to hear of the success you were meeting with.

**143.** Do not tack on an additional clause at the end of a sentence which, apparently, is complete in thought.

Bad: The other concern is planning to open a very strong advertising campaign; or at least it is rumored so.

Good: The other concern, it is rumored, is planning to open a very strong advertising campaign.

**144.** Do not use the participle in the absolute construction. It weakens the force of the sentence. (See Rule 107.)

Weak: This typewriter having won the contest, we began to advertise strongly.

Better: After this typewriter had won the contest, we began to advertise strongly.

### *Euphony*

**145.** The sentence should be so constructed that it will have a pleasing sound.

**146.** Avoid the use of words and combinations of words which are difficult to pronounce.

Bad: These bonds are our best offerings.

Bad: We require a day to do two of these plates.

Bad: Fire alarms need never annoy you if you have our sprinkler.

**147.** Avoid repeating the same word in a sentence.

Bad: After we had received your order we ordered our agents to order the lamps from Hackett & Company.

Good: After we had received your order we directed our agents to buy the lamps from Hackett & Company.

**148.** Avoid an unintentional rhyme or the repetition of similar sounds.

Bad: We have made few sales on our No. 8 pails.

Bad: We shall write to right this matter.

*Revision After Dictation*

**149.** Effective sentences are secured by revision. This means that after you have expressed your thoughts and have them before you on paper, you should go over your work to correct the mistakes you have made; in this way alone can you secure clear, forceful sentences which are grammatically correct. If, on the other hand, you strive to think of your idea and grammatical rules at the same time you will find that you have secured grammatical but forceless sentences.

Two points to be remembered are: First, get your *ideas* down on paper; second, revise for mistakes in sentence structure. The necessity for this is constant. Even experienced writers sometimes find that their sentences show certain habitual faults; for instance, the frequent use of the participle in the absolute construction, or the split infinitive. If nothing more, there is often a lack of flexibility—a failure to make use of appropriate sentence forms. The writer who has not mastered the possibilities of the various sentence

forms is as much hampered as the one whose vocabulary contains only a few hundred words.

**150.** To be effective, a sentence must be clear, interesting, grammatical, and correctly adjusted to its place in the paragraph. It is by revision that we are given the opportunity of going over our sentences to find whether or not they are effective sentences. All sentences, with the exception of recognized idioms, should be constructed in accordance with the principles of *unity*, *coherence*, and *emphasis*.

#### IV. PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE.

**151.** The paragraph, the largest unit in composition, is the development of one specific topic. It must have a clearly defined central idea upon which every one of the sentences directly bears. In most letters and compositions the paragraph should have the power-to-stand-alone quality. Under certain conditions in business English, as in sales letters, paragraphs do not develop a specific topic, but state merely an idea in one short sentence in order to attract attention. Such forms are not paragraphs according to the literary standard, but are only passages that have the outward appearance of the paragraph. In business English, however, paragraphs are formed arbitrarily to meet the demand for emphasis, attention, ease in reading, and so on.

**152.** The paragraph was designed mainly for the convenience of the reader, and accomplishes this end in two ways: first, it makes reading easy for the eye by breaking up the solid masses of reading matter; second, it makes reading easy for the brain by giving it a resting place and a fresh start. The paragraph has, for its purpose, the economizing of the reader's attention.

**153.** A page of type or printed matter is made more attractive and restful to the eye and mind by being broken up into paragraphs. This fact is especially made use of in sales letters and advertising copy.

**154.** The mechanical marks of a paragraph are: the indentation of the first line, double space between the para-



graphs with no indention, a combination of both, or a paragraph sign (§).

**155.** The length of paragraphs, as of sentences, is of importance in business English. Certain desired impressions can be imparted to the reader by paragraphs of different lengths, but the writer must harmonize his sentence structure with his paragraph structure. (See Rule 84.)

**156.** The length of the paragraph depends largely upon the tone that is to be used, the class of readers that is to be reached, and the result that is desired.

**157.** The snappy, brisk, progressive tone is secured by the use of short, live paragraphs. The polished, dignified, formal, conservative tone is secured by the use of long, smooth paragraphs. Adapt your tone so that it will represent yourself and your house.

**158.** The short paragraph is used in writing to uneducated people, progressive business men, farmers, and so on. The long paragraph is used in writing to educated people, professional classes, wealthy classes, women, and conservative business men.

**159.** Where action is desired, or where attention needs to be attracted, use short paragraphs. When you desire to convince, or to conciliate the reader—as in letters answering complaints—or when you desire smoothness or delicacy of touch, use long paragraphs.

**160.** By a short paragraph we mean one that consists of not more than two short sentences. By a long paragraph we mean one that consists of four or more sentences.

**161.** Do not as a rule use all long or all short paragraphs in the composition. A variety of paragraphs, of

different lengths, is more pleasing to the eye and mind than paragraphs of the same length throughout, and gives the writer opportunity for emphasizing important ideas by putting them into short paragraphs.

**162.** In such types of business English as sales-letters and advertisements, good effects may be secured from paragraphing an important clause.

The Pictorial Section of the *New York Times* is the woman's supplement of the best Sunday newspaper in America. It is read from cover to cover.

What the Pictorial Section has done—is doing—for others, it can do for you—

If you give it an opportunity.

**163.** When attention is to be secured, as at the beginning of a sales-letter, short, crisp paragraphs should be used.

A flicker, a flash, and the high-pitched hum of your generators ceases.

That means trouble.

You know what happens then, because you have been through the same thing before. There is the hustling around, the finding of the "trouble," the imperative demand for speed in repair, because you must get the power.....

*Compare this with:*

A flicker, a flash, and the high-pitched hum of your generators ceases. That means trouble. You know what happens then, because you have been through the same thing before. There is the hustling around, the finding of the "trouble," the imperative demand for speed in repair, because you must get the power.....

**164.** When action is desired, the short, brisk paragraph should predominate in the letter as in the following example:

Gentlemen:

The New York *Times* is the acknowledged financial advertising medium in New York. It prints more financial announcements than any other newspaper in the world.

On January 4, 1914, the New York *Times* will publish a special section dealing with financial transactions of 1913 on the New York Stock Exchange, with a business forecast for 1914.

There will be cable dispatches from European financial centers, giving reviews of market conditions and much other information of value.

This special section will be read by bankers, brokers, business men and investors generally. It will have a sale of at least 200,000 copies.

We suggest the insertion of an advertisement or statement of your bank in the columns of the New York *Times* Annual Financial Number of January 4th. The cost will be \$— per column, 21½ inches long and pro rata to one-quarter single column. Smaller space at \$— per inch, single column.

We send a sample copy of the New York *Times* under another cover.

We shall appreciate your order.

Yours very truly,

**165.** Long paragraphs are used in letters that adjust differences, refuse credit, answer complaints, and so on.

**Example:** We were glad to receive your letter of March 8, in which you informed us that the table sent you on February 25 was not received in perfect condition, because it gives us this opportunity of assuring you that everything will be made just as you want it. Although our records show that the table was all right in every respect when it went from our Inspection Department, nevertheless, under no circumstances would we want you to keep anything from our house that was not just right.

**Note:** This long paragraph with its long sentence structure, since it is far removed from the curt, action-getting short paragraph structure, gives the impression of smoothness and calmness.

**166.** When the impression of strength, solidity, and conservatism is desired, use long paragraphs.

**Example:** On behalf of the Government of the State of Sao Paulo, tenders of all or any part of \$350,000 of these bonds at prices below par and interest are invited. All tenders should be in writing, and be in the office of the Federal City Bank of Brooklyn on or before July 9, 1914. These tenders should clearly indicate the amount offered, the price expressed on an "and interest" basis and include an agreement to deliver bonds accepted on tenders to the Federal City Bank of Brooklyn within five days from the advice of the acceptance of such tenders against payment in New York funds.

**Example:** Considerable time has passed since we first approached you, and as we should like to know definitely the present status of these matters, it will be appreciated if you will check the enclosed card. This will give us information that will materially assist us in our efforts to serve you. It will also enable us to address you on your requirements at the proper time, or will permit us to remove your name from our follow-up files.

**167.** Long paragraphs are used to convince.

Example: Just see what we do to give you good goods at low prices. We go into the raw material markets and make purchases in immense quantities. That's one big saving. The raw stuff comes to us in car quantities—that means no leakage for transportation. We work it up under the most systematic methods that a corps of the world's best manufacturing experts can devise—more saving. It is done in a factory that is known throughout the land for its completeness, comfortable appointment and excellent arrangement. From the time the steel is refined and the oak and hickory are milled out of the log until they come together in the finished vehicle, there is no opportunity for waste. That's how we economize for you.

*Unity in the Paragraph*

**168.** The purpose of paragraphing is to economize the reader's time; *i. e.*, to make the reading as easy as possible for him.

**169.** Good paragraphing is a matter of prevision. The dictator or writer of a letter should know, before he starts, the distinct topics that he is going to put into this letter. It is a good rule to jot down the topics on paper before starting to dictate. After a little practice one can hold them in his head. Especially in answering letters is it a good plan to pick out the topics and know how you are going to paragraph them. The dictator should not think in a random, desultory way, but should think in paragraphs. Thinking in paragraphs is a characteristic of good correspondents and should be cultivated. It depends on common sense and logic.

**170.** The reader can quickly comprehend the thought if he sees a logical progress from idea to idea. The visible method of showing this progress is to put each distinct idea into a paragraph by itself. By this mechanical method, the visible detachment of the paragraph from what precedes and what follows, the reader is told that a new idea is being presented, and he is thereby prepared for it. If two distinct ideas were in the same paragraph, the reader would not easily see where one left off and the other began. This would mean confusion and an indistinct impression, for the mind can grasp with complete clearness only one idea at a time. To help the reader we, therefore, have the following rule:

**171.** A paragraph should contain but one distinct idea. Every sentence in the paragraph should directly aid in developing that idea. If a sentence does not pertain immediately to the main idea it does not belong in the paragraph.

Example: Behind this concern lies a matchless experience. It has dealt for decades with hundreds of big affairs. It has stood for the pilot in countless vast undertakings, and has seen all the rocks and shoals. Its intimates have been the successful. It has men of ideas, men who know human nature. Nowhere else in the world is there such a corps of all-round experts in salesmanship. And they work together—mass their abilities—on each undertaking.

Note: The above paragraph contains two distinct ideas: (1) the idea that the concern has had a matchless experience; and (2) the idea that its employes are experts. We should, therefore, break up the paragraph into two paragraphs, each containing a separate idea.

Improved: Behind this concern lies a matchless experience. It has dealt for decades with hundreds of big affairs. It has stood for the pilot in countless vast undertakings, and has seen all the rocks and shoals. Its intimates have been the successful.

It has men of ideas, men who know human nature. Nowhere else in the world is there such a corps of all-around experts in salesmanship. And they work together—mass their abilities—on each undertaking.

**172.** To test the unity of a paragraph, see if the paragraph can be summed up in one key sentence. If the two paragraphs given just above are tested for unity the key sentences are: (1) this concern has had a matchless experience; (2) this concern has expert workers.

**173.** In many cases the functions that a letter must perform determine the paragraphing of the letter. A letter answering a complaint, for example, should perform four functions, in the order given: (1) impress the reader with the belief in your sincerity and good will; (2) show the causes of the trouble and the facts in the case; (3) state what you are going to do about the complaint, what you have done, and what you wish the complainant to do; (4) convince the complainant that it is still to his advantage to do business with you.

**174.** A letter answering a complaint, therefore, will have at least four paragraphs—*i. e.*, one paragraph for each function or each new idea. The writer may find that several paragraphs may be needed to give the causes of the trouble. In that case each of the several paragraphs should make a complete step in the progress of the message.

Note: The following letter was sent in answer to a letter of complaint stating that unless shipments were made on time the business of the complainant would cease:

*Conciliates* We desire to thank you for your letter of July 15, in which you called our attention to the fact that you have not received the goods ordered by you on June 20. Allow us to express our regret also for any inconvenience caused you by the non-arrival of the shipment.

*States the facts in the case* We have gone over our records and have found that your order left the shipping department on June 23. According to our schedule these goods should have been received by you by July 7 at the very latest. It occasionally happens that the railroad misplaces or unnecessarily delays shipments, and this has probably happened with your order.

*Tells what has been done* Already we have started a tracer to find out what the trouble is, but if we cannot locate the goods within the next four days, we shall send you a duplicate shipment.

*A bid for a continuation of business* We are extremely sorry that there has been this delay, but it is one of those cases that are out of our hands. We know that you will understand that it is not the fault of our house, but that of the railroad company. We shall do everything in our power to see that such a delay does not occur again.

**175.** Another example of paragraphing determined by functions to be performed is the sales-letter. The functions of a sales-letter are: (1) to attract attention; (2) to create desire; (3) to convince; (4) to stimulate to action. Each function should have at least one paragraph. It will often be necessary to devote several paragraphs to the developing of one function.



- Attracts attention* Dr. Steinmetz, up at the General Electric Company, at Schenectady, is a better electrician than a politician, although he did run on the Socialist ticket in this last election.
- Creates desire* Like Steinmetz, I am a better man at one thing than I am at all others. That one thing is the installing of electrical machinery and the doctoring of it when it is sick.
- Creates desire* You, of course, are interested in making profits, and the best way to get increased profits is by cutting down expenses. An item of expense that you have to meet is that of repairs to electrical apparatus—whether the electrical machinery of a large power plant or merely the wiring of a building for bells or lights.
- Convinces* Time and again has my organization been tested on installment and repair problems of the most complex character, and time and again it has shown its ability to handle the problem with the maximum of efficiency. The experience that I have gained in this specific work during the past fourteen years I now offer you. It has been successful experience too, for, should you want evidence concerning my past achievements, I can give you the names of my clients. They will answer your questions, because they are satisfied with my work.
- Stimulates to action* Call me up personally at 112 party S, Jersey City, or mail the enclosed card.

**176.** Paragraph each speech of a conversation.

Wrong: The history of this disagreement is as follows: I wrote, "Will you take \$1.02 a bushel?" "Must have \$1.02½," he telegraphed. "I will take it at \$1.02½," I replied.

**Right:** The history of this disagreement is as follows:

I wrote, "Will you take \$1.02 a bushel?"

"Must have \$1.02½," he telegraphed.

"I will take it at \$1.02½," I replied.

### *Form Paragraphs*

**177.** In order to save time in handling routine correspondence many business houses use form paragraphs. These paragraphs have been selected from successful letters, or have been written expressly to be used as paragraphs to form the letter. They are indexed and numbered, so that they may be quickly recombined to answer most letters. Sometimes they can be used to make up the entire letter, but in most cases they can be used for a part of the letter and the remainder can be dictated.

**178.** The principle of unity has a practical use in form paragraphs, for, unless each paragraph deals with but one point, it cannot be combined with many other paragraphs. The form paragraph reaches the maximum of efficiency only when it is a unit—only when it is complete in itself.

**179.** Another argument in favor of the use of form paragraphs for routine correspondence is that since each paragraph has been carefully selected or written it is more effective than the paragraph dictated on the spur of the moment. Then again, the general standard of the letters of the house will be raised through the use of good form paragraph letters, because the head correspondent can easily supervise the paragraphs in use.

**180.** After a little practice the correspondents will remember by its number the exact paragraph they want. Then they make up the answers to letters by jotting down

on the letters the numbers of the paragraphs-with any fill-in data. An example of this is:

6.....14  
 25.....suit model 14687  
 42  
 80

The stenographer goes to her file of paragraphs and copies those paragraphs which have been numbered on the letters, at the same time filling in the points given. The result is the following letter:

We are glad to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your order of May 14.

On account of the heavy orders we have received during the last week we are temporarily out of stock of suit model 14687. We had already placed an order with our factory to fill up our line in that model and expect to receive it within a few days. We have accordingly placed your order on file and shall forward the goods as soon as we receive them.

We are very sorry that we are unable to ship your order at once and sincerely hope that you will not be inconvenienced by this short delay.

We thank you for your order and hope that we may be allowed to serve you again in the near future.

### *Coherence in the Paragraph*

**181.** Coherence in the paragraph demands that the sentences be arranged in logical order and that they be so constructed and connected as to make smooth the progress of the thought. Fast, smooth, reading is especially desirable in sales-letter and in advertising copy so that the attention of the reader may be held. The demands of space and the

demand of fast reading in sales-letters and advertising copy cause a connotative coherence (*i. e.*, a coherence secured by logical presentation of the thought assisted but little by the use of expressed connecting phrases or words) to be used in those cases.

**182.** Arrange the members of a sentence so as to form close connection with the preceding sentence.

Poor Connection: You will find on investigation that a large number of the principal contractors now own their own diving apparatus and use their own men for such diving as they have to do. The expense and loss of time due to securing a regular diver is thus saved.

Better Connection: You will find on investigation that a large part of the principal contractors now own their own diving apparatus and use their own men for such diving as they may have to do. *This* saves the expense and loss of time due to securing a regular diver.

Poor Connection: Our confidence in the system and in your ability to appreciate its merits when fairly tested is so great that we are willing to bear all this risk and expense. If the outfit were not in every way worthy of the high endorsement it has received we could not do this.

Better Connection: Our confidence in the system and in your ability to appreciate its merits when fairly tested is so great that we are willing to bear all this risk and expense. *This* we could not do if the outfit were not in every way worthy of the high endorsement it has received.

Poor Connection: In one type of system, the dynamo or generator and the starting motor are combined in a single unit. These units are separate and work independently in the Gray and Davis Starting-Lighting System.

Better Connection: *In one type of system*, the dynamo or generator and the starting motor are combined in a single unit. *In the Gray and Davis Starting-Lighting System*, these units are separate and work independently.

**183.** Two or more sentences that have the same logical relation to the main idea should be arranged in similar form.

Examples: The Goodyear No-Rim-Cut Tires excel all other tires in at least four ways. They save the countless blowouts due to wrinkled fabric. They prevent absolutely rim-cutting. They combat loose treads and lessen the risk by sixty per cent. They have the all-weather-tread—tough, double thick and enduring.

The quality of our piano is of the very highest character. It has been highly commended by the world's most renowned of musical artists. It is a piano that will grace any parlor. It has been sold to the best families in the United States.

**184.** A judicious use of connecting words to show the relation of one sentence in the paragraph to the preceding sentence aids the reader in getting the thought. This method is very useful in argumentative and explanatory work, for the connecting words act as sign posts to point out an intricate way. In rapid narration, however, it is likely to result in a break in the thought. A careful use of good connectives helps; an unnecessary use deadens and slows up the thought.

**185.** When one sentence introduces a modification of the assertion made in the preceding sentence, such relation should usually be shown by a connective, as, *to be sure*, *at the same time*, etc.

Example: We can ship you this order so that it will reach you by July 2. We admit, *to be sure*, that this is made subject to conditions out of our control.

**186.** When one sentence introduces a consequence of what precedes, such relation, unless obvious, should be indicated by a connective word or phrase, as, *therefore*, *hence*, *accordingly*, *as a result*, and so on.

Example: If your work-rooms are not properly ventilated your employees cannot do efficient work. You lose money *as a result*, because you lose service.

**187.** When one sentence makes a statement contrasting with a preceding sentence, such relation should be shown by some connective, such as *but*, *nevertheless*, *on the other hand*, and so on.

Example: Our orders at first will be tentative. In a very short time, *however*, we shall be in a position to gauge the demand and frame our orders accordingly.

**188.** Connection between sentences can be secured by the use of demonstratives (*this*, *that*, etc.), pronouns (*he*, *it*, *they*, etc.), and by repetition.

Example: As a solution of the problem of foul air, we suggest our electric suction fan. *It* will draw out the foul air and allow fresh air to take its place. *This suction fan* can be installed in any window or partition and operated for three and one-half cents an hour.

**189.** The point of view in a paragraph should not be unnecessarily changed. Do not, however, strain to keep the same subject.

Bad: Fill out and mail the enclosed post card and a 50 lb. sample order at the regular cash price will be shipped to you. It should be given a thorough test and if it is not found to be the best value you ever had, there will be no charge.

Good: Fill out and mail the enclosed post card and you will receive a 50 lb. sample order at the regular cash price. Give it a thorough test and if you do not find it to be the best value you ever had you will not be charged a cent.

**190.** Arrange facts in chronological order.

**Bad:** Here are the facts as we have them on our records. We notified you on September 8 about the possible delay in shipment. We received your order on September 5 for goods embraced in our new line, which was not promised until early in October. The notification probably went astray, since you did not get it. The bill of lading was mailed on October 15 and the goods were sent October 13.

**Good:** Here are the facts as we have them on our records. We received your order on September 5 for goods embraced in our new line, which was not promised until early in October. We notified you on September 8 about the possible delay. The notification probably went astray, since you did not get it. The goods were sent on October 13 and the bill of lading mailed on October 15.

**191.** The type of the above paragraph is called the narrative order of paragraph. In it the facts are given in the order of their occurrence.

**192.** The descriptive order in the paragraph tries to reproduce the sensations that come through sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell, and also the emotions and perceptions. It deals with appearances, not actions.

**Example:** If you contemplate purchasing any operating tables we respectfully suggest that you consider particularly the Universal, which is illustrated on pages 10 and 11. This is the simplest operating table constructed. It is built to withstand the hardest usage and there is no complicated mechanism to get out of order. You will notice that the top is of a new substance, called Nicalloy. Nicalloy is a hard, solid metal that does not break like glass, does not stain like white enameled iron or steel and does not chip like porcelain enameled

iron or steel. It is unaffected by any of the liquids used in the operating room. It is a very simple matter to keep it always shining with the lustre of fine old silverware.

Emerging at the Third Floor from the elevator on the Madison Avenue side of the store, one finds oneself directly in the Fur Department. Spacious, well arranged and equipped, the rich tones of the handsome furs displayed on forms and in show cases present an artistic contrast with the soft Quaker gray of the carpet and woodwork. This department not improperly may be termed the most attractive—as it has also been quoted as the most extensive—retail fur department in America.

**193.** The expository type of paragraph is a type that explains. It sets forth underlying principles.

There are many vital reasons why an Edison Disc Record cannot be played creditably on any other than the instrument designed for it by Mr. Edison. In the first place the music has been recorded on it by an entirely different method. Other discs are cut by the lateral or side process while the Edison is cut by the up and down, or vertical process. Then again it is recorded 150 threads to the inch instead of 80 threads used on other discs. That means that the walls of the grooves are closer together on the Edison and not adapted to bear the strain of carrying the tone arm. Invariably where an attempt is made to use an Edison Disc on other than an Edison instrument the quality of the tone is impaired and the record rendered unfit for subsequent use.

**194.** The argumentative type of paragraph is a type that strives to win others over to the reader's view of a proposition.

In regard to the point that you raise about our having indorsed the check and that therefore its indorsement will act as a receipt in full for the invoices mentioned on the same check, we should like to say that we do not think that



this is very just. Your remittance was not made according to the terms. We supposed, of course, that this was simply a clerical error and that when called to your attention would be immediately adjusted. Our terms are the same to all our customers, and we, like all other well regulated houses, wish to have settlement made accordingly. May we ask you to think this over and decide if you believe we should accept your remittance as made because we are unable to return your check to you.

**195.** The deductive order in the paragraph begins with a general statement or a statement of the general idea at stake which is followed by details and illustrations. It may state the effect and then the causes. It has great attention value and the thought is easily read.

Examples: Bosch Plugs are right and act right. Proof of this fact is in the showing made by Bosch Products in the recent Vanderbilt Cup and Grand Prize Races. Both winners and EVERY car to finish used Bosch Plugs; also the Bosch Magneto. This was a gruelling test—more heat was present, more oil was used and greater speed was evident than you ever would require—but Bosch Plugs stood it.

You can't forget to make a Colt safe. It is automatically locked when cocked. It is then ready for instant use. It is then positively safe against accidental discharge.

**196.** The inductive order of paragraphs gives the concrete or specific facts first and ends with a general statement or conclusion drawn from them. It may begin with causes and end with the effect. It is used to convince and is best adapted to readers of the higher classes.

Examples: Pantasote is not injured by intense cold. It is not harmed by the baking sun. It is not damaged by

the spatters of road oil or grease. In short, it is especially manufactured for outside use.

Look back of the bond for the security on which it is based. Consider carefully the income from the investment. Learn of the marketability of the bond; study the possibility of appreciation. Do these things, and you have done all that you can do in insuring a good investment.

**197.** The climactic order in the paragraph places facts and statements in the order of their importance with the most important last. This secures emphasis.

Example: This newspaper purposes to lead. And it will lead because it will live. It will lead because it will ever be a better newspaper. It will lead because it will always have something useful to do for an army of men and women who are ever growing and ever advancing their ideas.

**198.** The amplifying paragraph is a paragraph which develops a point brought out in a previous paragraph.

. . . There are, accordingly, these three reasons why the dealer wants charge customers: (1) Charge customers buy more goods; (2) Charge customers buy higher priced goods; (3) Charge customers stick to the store.

The first of the three reasons why the retailer desires to have charge customers is that the charge customers buy more goods. This means that in many cases a customer would not buy articles for sale because he has not enough money with him at the time, or because he thinks he is spending too much money. If he were a charge customer he would merely say "Charge it" and would not realize how much he was buying.

**199.** A topic sentence paragraph is a paragraph in which the idea of the paragraph is usually expressed in one of the

sentences of the paragraph. This sentence is called the topic sentence. Often it is the first sentence in the paragraph. Sometimes it is placed last.

*Neither do I advocate a study of abstract principles that bear no relation to practical experience. I have lived long enough to appreciate the value of experience and the futility of pure abstractions. The only principles on which I would stake a penny's worth of time or money are those that are based directly on experience—not necessarily on my own experience, however, but on the experience of others as well. Such principles are in reality simply condensed experience.*

The lawyer may know how to get money, but his way of getting it is like killing the bees to get the money. The lawyer—with all due respect to his professional skill—is not a painless operator when it comes to extracting money from delinquent debtors. Flourishing the lash of the law he makes his demand for payment in cold, unfeeling terms which are sure to arouse antagonism. The element of salesmanship has no place in his method of making collections. *Legal measures, therefore, to enforce payment should be taken only as a last resort.*

**200.** In the preceding sections certain types of paragraphs have been defined and illustrated. The main reason that these different types should be used is that each of them has a particular use in making reading easy for the reader. Some order and method of presentation in the paragraph should be used, for if the idea is presented in a logical order the brain of the reader comprehends it quickly. Moreover, the writer must know the chief aim of his piece of writing. Whether this piece of writing is to be called description, narration, exposition, or argument depends upon its chief aim.

If the writer aims to explain, his use of description, narration, and argument should be kept subordinate to the main purpose aimed at.

### *Emphasis in the Paragraph*

**201.** Emphasis, of special importance in sales-letter writing, depends on proportion and position. Ideas that are important can be shown to be important by the amount of space they occupy in the paragraph.

**202.** The beginning and end of a paragraph are the two most important positions in the paragraph. See that they are filled with sentences that contain the most important ideas expressed in the most effective words.

**203.** A very short sentence at the end of a paragraph frequently secures emphasis. This sentence is usually a summary sentence.

**Example:** Don't hesitate to make definite arrangements for this service on account of any distance consideration. A large number of clients come a long distance for Royal Service. They find it worth their while. So will you.

**204.** A sentence or a short passage can be made especially emphatic by being paragraphed separately. (Rule 162.)

**Example:** She learns all its good points and you fortify her with facts and evidence about the superiority of our silk and the weak points of other silk. When she is ready to buy silk, she will want our silk and no other. All this information she will remember and will be ready to impart it to anyone who even mentions silk.

**Think what this will mean to your store.**

## V. DICTION

### *The Correct Use of Words*

**205.** The selection of the right word for the right place is of special importance to the business man in his written work because the chief tools by which he secures results are words. The words he uses should be understood by his readers, and should hold their interest, secure their confidence, and win their response.

**206.** The business writer should have at his command such a vocabulary that he need not grope or fumble for words while he is writing or dictating his thoughts, because if he is compelled continually to search for words, he cannot hope to avoid a forced and unnatural expression of his thought.

**207.** In the revision of written work, certain principles are helpful in bringing about the most efficient use of words. The principles given below, if applied, will give to business diction the desired *correctness, clearness, and force.*

**208.** Avoid words not in good use. A word is in good use when it is etymologically correct and when it is also *reputable, national, and present.*

**209.** A word is *reputable* when it is used by the majority of the best writers and speakers.

- a. Avoid vulgarisms, for they create an unfavorable impression of the writer using them. Examples: *pants, gents, ain't, enthuse, everywhere, tasty, etc.*

- b. Use words only in their correct sense; otherwise they will convey a different meaning from that intended. Examples: *aggravate* (for vex); *shall* (for will); *transpire* (for happen), etc.
- c. Avoid confounding words that are spelled or sound somewhat alike. Examples: *canvas, canvass; counsel, council; advice, advise; suspect, expect*.
- d. Avoid slang. Examples: "You should worry if you have our address"; "This is a pipe of a proposition"; "It is a cinch that we nail your order."

**210.** A word is *national* when it is understood in its true sense by all readers.

- a. Do not use provincial words, for they will be understood only by readers in certain localities. Examples: *tote, perk up, homesteader, and sightly*.
- b. Technical wording should not be used except in communications to readers who understand those words. Examples: *champfer, bevel, countersink* (from carpenter's trade); *tort, easement, bailor* (from law); *em, point, pica* (printing trade); *dull, easy, bearish, bullish, heavy, off* (from the financial vocabulary).

**211.** A word is *present* when it has been adopted into modern use.

- a. Do not use obsolete words, for they are likely not to be understood by the reader. Examples: *gotten* (for got), *quoth* (for said), *foreword* (for preface), *proven* (for proved), and *amongst* (for among).
- b. Do not use newly coined words, for they show bad taste. Examples: *hike, bosarty* (from beaux arts), *combine* (used as a noun), *suicide* (used as a verb), and *speedo-like*.

**212.** Avoid the use of the intensive pronouns, *myself*, *himself*, *yourself*, and so forth, unless used for emphasis. Do not be afraid to use *I*.

Wrong: The Secretary and *myself* will represent the corporation at the meeting.

Right: The Secretary and *I* will represent the corporation at the meeting.

**213.** Do not use *they* in the indefinite sense.

Crude: Waterbury ought to be a good field, for *they* manufacture brass there.

Better: Waterbury ought to be a good field, since brass is manufactured there.

**214.** Do not use *it* in the indefinite sense.

Crude: In your advertisement *it* says that you will send a sample.

Better: In your advertisement you say that you will send a sample.

Crude: In the policy *it* reads that there can be no revocation after one year.

Better: The policy reads that there can be no revocation after one year.

Exceptions: impersonal expressions, as, *it seems*, *it is hot*, *it appears*.

**215.** Avoid the following hackneyed and characterless expressions:

Your favor of the 15th instant to hand and in reply would say. . . .

Yours of the 2nd ultimo at hand. . . .

Your esteemed favor of the 8th received. . . .

We beg leave to. . . . We beg to remain. . . . We  
beg to state. . . . Believe me. . . .

Hoping to hear from you soon, we are. . . .

Thanking you in advance. . . . And oblige. . . .

We are enclosing herewith. . . . Please find en-  
closed. . . .

Answering yours of the 10th inst. we beg leave to  
say. . . .

Concerning yours of the 12th ultimo. . . .

Referring to yours of even date. . . .

Do not use "ultimo" or "ult.," "instant" or "inst.," "approx-  
imo" or "app.," but always use the name of the month:  
e. g., January 5; not, the 5th ultimo.

**216.** Contractions may be used in all cases except in formal and dignified compositions. Examples: *can't*, *won't*, *isn't*, *haven't*.

**217.** Avoid the use of long and unusual words; they cannot be so easily understood as short words. Example: "This soap is composed entirely of natural saponaceous ingredients of the highest emollient and detergent properties."

**218.** Avoid pretentious expressions. Examples: "May I venture to obtrude"; "I hope that you will acquit me of any seeming indelicacy or obtrusiveness for encroaching upon your valuable time in the capacity of an entire stranger."

**219.** Avoid general and unspecific words; they do not impress the reader. Be specific. Examples: *highest-grade*, *first-class*, and *best*. (See Best, page 93.)



**220.** Specific words should be used instead of general words, since they call to the mind a definite image.

Unspecific: Our product made a remarkable showing at the last contest.

Specific: Our typewriting machine won three first prizes at the typewriting contest held in New York City, June 24, 1914.

Unspecific: This underfeed furnace saved in coal for one man a large sum.

Specific: This Fitch underfeed furnace saved 50 per cent. in coal for Mr. R. E. Dickinson, of 12 Fifth St., Cincinnati.

**221.** Avoid the use of words of unpleasant or negative suggestion.

Unpleasant suggestion: We have received your *complaint* letter dated January 5.

Better: We were glad to receive your candid letter of Jan. 5.

Unpleasant suggestion: You *claim* in your letter that the table was scratched when you received it.

Better: From your letter we learn that the table was scratched when you received it.

### *Superfluous Words*

**222.** The use of superfluous words, as distinct from superfluous details or ideas, may take any one of three forms: *redundancy*, or the use of needless words; *tautology*, or a direct repetition of the thought; *verbosity*, or such a superfluity of words that condensation means complete re-writing.

**223.** Avoid redundancy, as it obscures the thought.

Bad: However, notwithstanding this fact it seems to me that the final part of this problem should be entirely eliminated.

Better: In spite of this fact, I think the final part of the problem should be eliminated.

Bad: There are several of these questions that have been gathered together and to which we must pay our attention at once.

Better: Several of these questions have been gathered and demand immediate attention.

**224.** Avoid tautology; it wearies the reader and fails to impress.

Bad: Your filing system is poorly and inefficiently arranged and by this inefficient arrangement it loses efficiency.

Better: The poor arrangement of your filing system causes it to be inefficient.

**225.** Avoid verbosity; it is neither economical nor effective.

Bad: Realizing that your business requires more prompt attention, and that I can personally serve you to better advantage, both in the question of prices and delivery, through the medium of this company, I respectfully request for same, the consideration of me personally, which you so generously favored me with, as representative of the concerns I have recently been associated with.

Better: As I can give you better prices and quicker delivery in my present employment, than in my previous employment, I ask that you continue to do business with me.

*Prepositions*

**226.** Many mistakes are made in the use of prepositions. Consider carefully the following brief list of words with the appropriate preposition to be used with each:

agree <i>with</i> (a person)	dependent <i>on</i>
agree <i>to</i> (a proposition)	differ <i>from</i> (person or thing)
bestow <i>upon</i>	differ <i>with</i> (in opinion)
compare <i>with</i> (to determine value)	different <i>from</i>
compare <i>to</i> (because of similarity)	glad <i>of</i>
comply <i>with</i>	need <i>of</i>
confide <i>in</i> (to trust in)	part <i>from</i> (a person)
confide <i>to</i> (to intrust to)	part <i>with</i> (a thing)
confer <i>on</i> (to give, to talk about)	profit <i>by</i>
confer <i>with</i> (to talk with)	prohibit <i>from</i>
convenient <i>to</i> (a place)	reconcile <i>to</i> (a person)
convenient <i>for</i> (a purpose)	reconcile <i>with</i> (a statement)
	scared <i>by</i>
	think <i>of</i> or <i>about</i>

*Figures of Speech*

**227.** Figures of speech are used (1) to make the thought clearer and more forceful, and (2) to make the thought more agreeable or attractive.

**228.** Avoid the use of a simile or metaphor that makes an incongruous figure or is incongruously literal.

Bad: He is the only man in the organization who is able to steer it on its march to success.

Good: He is the only man in the organization who is able to guide it on its march to success.

Bad: The war that has been waged on fraudulent advertising has reached the goal of success.

Good: The war that has been waged on fraudulent advertising has been successful.

Bad: This article has passed through the fire of long tests and is now ripe for exploitation.

(The first figure, "passed through the fire", is incongruous with the second figure, "is now ripe.")

Good: This article has passed through the fire of long tests and is now ready for exploitation.

**229.** Avoid blending the literal with the metaphorical.

Bad: Upon entering the store, his eye was struck by the new fixture.

(The figure, "was struck", is too literal.)

Good: Upon entering the store, he saw the new fixture.

Bad: He threw his whole soul and the \$5,000 his aunt had given him into the new campaign.

(In such cases as this, it is necessary to recast the entire sentence.)

Recast: He entered heartily into the campaign and contributed to it the \$5,000 his aunt had given him.

**230.** Avoid figures of speech that have unpleasant or negative suggestion, or are not apt.

Bad: We are as full of hosiery as an egg is full of meat.

Bad: Our business reputation is as clean as a hound's tooth.

Bad: Chew Arrowmint and you will have a breath as sweet as a cow's.

*Miscellaneous Faulty Expressions*

**231.** There are certain words and expressions frequently misused. The following list contains the ones most commonly met with.

**A, an.** The form *an* is used before vowel sounds; the form *a*, before consonant sounds. The sound of the first letter of a word must be noticed, for a consonant is often silent and the word really begins with a vowel sound; on the other hand, some letters may be either vowels or consonants, according to their position, and hence the word may begin seemingly with a vowel, but actually begins with a consonant. Examples: *a youth's suit, a union suit, an honor, such a one, a humble letter.*

**Accept, except.** *Accept* means *to receive*; as, "They *accepted* the goods." *Except* (verb) means *to exclude*; as, "We want you to *except* the last clause of this contract." *Except* (preposition) means *with the exception of*; as, "We found everything *except* the box of lace."

**Advise.** This word is used to excess in business letters. It implies giving advice; as, "We *advise* you to sell out at once."

**Affect, effect.** *Affect* means *to influence*; as, "The price of our material was greatly *affected* by this rumor." *Effect* (verb) means *to accomplish, to bring about, to cause*; as, "This new system will *effect* a great saving." *Effect* (noun) means *result*; as, "The *effect* of the dissolution was immediately felt." *Affect* is never used as a noun. *Effect* is used both as a verb and as a noun.

**Aggravate** should never be used for *annoy*, *vex*, or *exasperate*. It means *to make worse*; as, "His financial difficulties were *aggravated* by this failure."

**All ready, already.** *Already* is an adverb and means *by this time*; as, "When I had arrived, the business had *already* been completed." *All ready*, an adjective phrase, means *ready, prepared in every particular*; as, "We are *all ready* to begin negotiations with you."

**All right** should never be written *alright*.

**Almost, most.** *Almost* should be used as an adverb; *most* as an adjective or a noun. "*Most* all the employees reported" is incorrect. Write "*Almost* all the employees reported," or "*Most* of the employees reported." (*Most* is also used as an adverb to form the superlative.)

**Alternative, choice.** *Alternative* means *the choice of only two things*. Write, "One of three courses"—not "One of three alternatives." "He was given his *alternative* of these two things." "He had his choice of five samples at the same price."

**Among, between.** *Among* is used in referring to more than two things; *between* in referring to two only. "The dissension *among* the five firms arose over a matter of rebating." "The differences *between* the two departments were soon settled."

**Amount** should not be used for number. Do not say, "A large amount of people came to the store."

**Any place, anywhere.** *Any place* should be written *anywhere*; as, "He could not find the letter *anywhere*," not "He could not find the letter *any place*."

**Appreciate** means *to estimate justly* or *to value highly*. It should not be modified by *greatly* or *very much*. "I *very much appreciate* the favor you have done me" is incorrect.

**Apt, liable, likely.** *Apt* indicates natural inclination or habitual tendency; as, "Office forces, without a strong manager, are *apt* to become disorganized." *Liable* has the suggestion of danger; as, "By breaking the contract he has become *liable* for damages." *Likely* indicates simply probability; as, "It is *likely* to rain to-morrow"; not "It is *apt* to rain to-morrow."

**As...as, so...as.** *So...as* is used in negative statements rather than *as...as*. Example: "The catalogues are not *so* handsome *as* you said they would be."

**As, like.** *As* is the correct word when a verb follows or is understood to follow. "He is not prompt in his payments *like* we are" is incorrect. It should be, "He is not prompt in his payments *as we are*." See **Like**.

**As, that.** *As* should never be confused with *that*. "We do not know *as* we can do that" is incorrect.

**As per your order.** Don't use. It is hackneyed and trite.

**At, about.** Drop the *at*. "The letter was brought in *at about* two o'clock" is incorrect.

**Awful** should not be used loosely. It means *inspiring with awe*. "He made an *awful* mistake" is incorrect.

**Badly** should not be used for *very much* or *a great deal*. "We want *badly* to have you come in to see us" should read "We want *very much* to have you come in to see us."

**Balance, remainder, rest.** *Balance* means *equality*. It should not be used in the sense of *remainder* or *rest*; as, "Kindly send the *balance* of the goods."

**Bank on, to take stock in.** Slang expressions used in the sense of *to rely on, to trust in*. They should generally be avoided.

**Beg** is used too much in business correspondence and usually not correctly. Avoid using it. If you do use *beg*, it should be followed by *leave* or *permission*. "I *beg* to state" is incorrect; "I *beg leave* to state" is correct; "I *beg permission* to go" is correct.

**Besides, beside.** Not interchangeable. *Besides* means *in addition to, moreover*; as "Besides this inducement, we can offer you others." *Beside* means *near, close to*; as, "His desk is *beside* the entrance."

**Best** has little value now as a word because it has so often been misused, and because no one believes it. Be specific in your claims. "Our goods are the *best* in the world." Tell the reader in what respect your goods are the best; for what purpose they are best. *Best* and other superlatives do not tell the reader anything. Do not use them often.



**Borrow** should not be confused with *lend*. "He would not *borrow* me the money" is incorrect.

**Bound, determine.** *Bound* refers to outside compulsion. *Determine* means a decision made by a person. "We are not *bound* by law to pay this debt, but we are *determined* to do so."

**Bring, carry, fetch, take.** These words have different meanings. *Bring* suggests motion toward the speaker. "*Bring* me that catalogue." "*Take* suggests motion away from the speaker. "*Take* these books from my desk." *Fetch* suggests going away from the speaker for a thing and returning with it. *Carry* suggests an indefinite motion.

**But that, but what.** *But* in connection with *that* is often redundant and should be omitted. "We have no doubt *but that* you have overlooked this item" should be "We have no doubt *that* you have overlooked this item." *But what* is properly used when the meaning is *but that which*. "I don't know *but what* this suit is as good as that one" is incorrect. "He described the matter in detail, *but what* I said was not important," is correct.

**Can, may.** *Can* denotes *power* or *ability* and should not be used for *may* which denotes *permission*.

Wrong: *Can* I forward these suits to you?

Right: *May* I forward these suits to you?

**Cannot but.** This expression should not be used interchangeably with *can but* as the two expressions differ

in meaning. The expression "We *can but* try" means "All we can do is to try." "We *cannot but* try" means "We cannot help trying."

**Can't seem** is a vulgarism. Write "seem unable" or "do not seem able."

Wrong: I *can't seem* to get it.

Right: I *seem unable* to get it.

**Capacity, ability.** *Capacity* means the power of *receiving*. It has reference to the receptive powers. "He has the *capacity* to learn." *Ability* means the power to *perform, to do*. It has reference to the active exercise of our faculties. "He has the *ability* to do this work."

**Continual** means *frequently repeated actions* and should not be confused with *continuous*, which means *uninterrupted action*.

Right: *Continual* early sales depressed the price of the stock.

**Couldn't seem.** See **Can't seem.**

**Council, counsel.** *Council* indicates a group of persons who take counsel. *Counsel* means *advice* or a *legal advisor*.

**Custom, habit.** *Custom* means *an action voluntarily repeated*. *Habit* means *a tendency to repeat a certain action without volition*.

**Deal** is a vulgarism for *transaction, arrangement, or agreement*.

**Definite, definitive.** *Definite* means *well defined*. *Definitive* means *final*.

**Different than.** "Our paint is *different than* all others" is incorrect. It should read "Our paint is *different from* all others." *Different* should not be completed by a *than* clause, but always by a *from* phrase.

**Differ from, differ with.** Persons, things, and opinions *differ from* each other; persons *differ in* opinion *with* each other. "I *differ from* him in attitude, but I do not *differ with* him in regard to the final action."

**Demean** means *to behave one's self* and should not be used for *debase* or *degrade*.

**Directly** is often misused for *as soon as*; as, "*Directly* we receive your order we shall ship it." This should read "*As soon as* we receive your order, we shall ship it."

**Disagree** is generally followed by *with* instead of *from*. "He *disagreed with* me over the terms of the contract."

**Don't** is a contraction of *do not*; therefore, it is ungrammatical when used with a subject in the third person singular. One may say "*I don't*," but not "*He don't*." Say, "*He doesn't*."

**Due to** should not be used unless *due* modifies a noun.  
 Wrong: *Due to* this cause our factory has been delayed in making up your order.  
 Right: *On account of* this cause our factory has been delayed in making up this order.

**Each, every,** "*Each* of the employees *was* paid off."  
 "*Every one* of the hands has received his pay."

**Each other** should not be used for *one another*. *Each other* should not be used unless each member of a group is represented as in a certain relation to every other member.

Wrong: The changes in the style of cloaks to be worn next year are rapidly following *each other*.

Right: The changes in the style of cloaks to be worn next year are rapidly following *one another*.

Right: The two members of the firm are very much devoted to *each other*.

Right: In this crisis we have decided to stand by *each other*.

(*Each* member of the group governed by the word *we* has decided to stand by *every other* member.)

**Effect.** See **Affect**.

**Either, neither.** *Either* and *neither* should not be used to designate more than two persons or things. To designate one of three or more, write *any one* or *none*.

Wrong: The firm directed three of its salesmen to report on Friday, but *neither* of them came in.

Right: The firm directed three of its salesmen to report on Friday, but *none* of them came in.

**Else.** "*Somebody else's* desk; not *somebody's else* desk."

**Every place** should be written *everywhere*.

**Enormity, enormousness.** *Enormity* has reference to moral quality; *enormousness* to size.

Right: He does not realize the *enormity* of his crime.

Right: The *enormousness* of the undertaking did not affect them.

**Exceptional, exceptionable.** *Exceptional* describes a case outside of the operation of a rule. *Exceptionable* is that which is imperfect, subject to corrections and exceptions.

**Expect, suppose, suspect.** *Expect* looks toward the future.

Wrong: We *expect* that you have already written to us.

Right: We *suppose* that you have already written to us.

*Suspect* indicates distrust.

Wrong: We *suspect* that the goods have arrived by this time.

Right: We *suspect* this man of dishonesty.

**Excellent** should not be qualified; it is a superlative.

Wrong: This proposition is *most excellent*.

Right: This proposition is *excellent*.

**Except (verb).** See **Accept**.

**Except (preposition).** Should not be used as a conjunction.

Wrong: The shippers won't do that except you ask them.

Right: The shippers won't do that unless you ask them.

**Farther, further.** *Farther* refers to distance; *further* to that which is more or additional. "We wrote nothing *further*." "He is *farther* from his source of supply than any other dealer."

**Former, latter.** *Former* and *latter* should not be used to designate one of more than two persons or things. For designating one of three or more, say "first," "first-named," or "last," "last-named."

**Few, less.** *Few* refers to numbers; *less* to quantity. "No firm had *fewer* friends than they" (not *less* friends).

**Find, locate.** *Find* means to come upon by seeking. *Locate* means to set in a particular place.

Wrong: I could not *locate* you in your office yesterday.

Right: I could not *find* you in your office yesterday.

Right: We shall *locate* our store in New Haven.

**Fine** is indefinite in meaning. Avoid using it. See **Best**.

**Got** is very often misused. "What has that *got* to do with it?" should be "What has that to do with it?" "We have *got* to leave" should be "We are *obliged* to leave." "Have you *got* time?" should be "*Have* you time?" "I have *got* your order" is correct because it means I have secured your order. *Got* should, therefore, not be used unless the intended meaning is *secured*.

**Gotten** is an obsolete form. Say *got*.

**Guess** is often misused for *think, suppose, except*, etc.

Wrong: I *guess* that we shall arrive about noon.

Right: I *think* that we shall arrive about noon.

**Had ought.** *Ought* is never used with an auxiliary.

Wrong: He *had ought* to have written.

Right: He *ought* to have written.

**Hanged, hung.** *Hanged* should be used in reference only to an execution.

Wrong: Many pictures had been *hanged* in the display window.

Right: Many pictures had been *hung* in the display window.

**Have, got. See Got.**

**Healthy, healthful, wholesome.** A *healthy* man; a *healthful* place; *wholesome* food.

**If** should never be used in the sense of *whether*.

Wrong: I have not heard *if* I can give you that price.

Right: I have not heard *whether* I can give you that price.

**Implies, infers.** *Implies* means *virtually includes* or *virtually means*, as, "Your attitude implies that you desire to break your contract." *Infer* means *to conclude, to deduce*, as, "I infer from your attitude that you desire to break your contract."

**In.** Generally incorrect when used to express motion. Use into.

Wrong: We got him just as he stepped *in* the store.

Right: We got him just as he stepped *into* the store.

**Infers.** See **Implies.**

**Inside of.** In expressions of time say *within*; as "This will be shipped *within* four days" (not "*inside of* four days.")

**Its, it's.** The possessive pronoun is *its*. *It's* is the abbreviation of *it is*.

**Kind, sort,** are singular. Do not say "We don't keep any stock in those *kind* of engines."

**Kind of, sort of** (1) should not be followed by *a* or *an*.

Wrong: That *kind of an* engine we do not keep.

Right: That *kind of* engine we do not keep.

Wrong: What *sort of a* man is he?

Right: What *sort of* man is he?

**Kind of, sort of** (2) should not be used to modify verbs or adjectives; say "somewhat," "somehow," or "rather."

Wrong: Business is *sort of* quiet for us.

Right: Business is *somewhat* quiet for us.

**Lay, lie,** are frequently confounded. *Lay* (to put down) is transitive and takes an object. *Lie* (to recline) is in-



transitive and does not take an object. The principal parts are:

<i>Present</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Perfect.</i>
I lie	I lay	I have lain.
I lay	I laid	I have laid.

Correct: I left the office and went home to *lie* down.  
 He *laid* the file on my desk.  
 Feeling sick he *lay* down.  
 Feeling tired I *laid* the books on the table.

**Led, lead.** *Lead* is commonly misused for the past tense of *to lead*. The principal parts of *lead* are:

<i>Present</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Perfect</i>
I lead	I led	I have led.

"Carney *led* (not *lead*) the organization in the amount sold."

**Liabile.** See **Apt.**

**Like** is an adjective, and means *similar to*; as, "The selling plan was *like* one of which we had heard before," "He is *like* the old Mr. Arth." *Like* in the sense of *in the same manner as*, is followed by a noun or a pronoun in the objective case, and is called by some grammarians an adverb; by others, a preposition; e. g., "He writes *like* the bookkeeper," "He talks *like* me." *Like* should never be used to introduce a subject with a verb; use "*as*" or "*as if*."

Wrong: Do this *like* we want you to do it.  
 Right: Do this *as* we want you to do it.

Wrong: Do *like* I do.

Right: Do *as* I do.

Correct: Write *like* him.

Correct: Write *as* he does.

**Likely.** See **Apt.**

**Line (1).** Do not say "line" in the sense of *kind* or *business*.

Wrong: In what line of business are you now working?

Right: In what kind of business are you now working?

**Line (2).** Avoid the use of "line" as shown in the following expressions:

Wrong: Do you keep anything in the brass *line*?

Wrong: I do not want anything in the advice *line* from you.

Right: I do not want any advice from you.

**Lose, loose.** *Loose* is commonly misused for *lose*; as, "If we *loose* (*lose*) this sale you are to blame." *Loose* means *to untie, to set free*.

**Lot** means *a distinct part or parcel*, and does not mean a great number.

Wrong: We know a *lot* of business houses who will use your appliance.

Right: We know a *number* of business houses who will use your appliance.

**Might of.** See **Of.**

**Miss** when used as a title must be followed by the name.

Wrong: My dear *Miss*.

Right: My dear *Miss* Smith.

**Most.** See **Almost.**

**Must.** See **Of.**

**Near** should not be used for *nearly*.

Wrong: The final returns from this bond will be not *near* so much as from the other.

Right: The final returns from this bond will be not *nearly* so much as from the other.

**Of.** *Could of, may of, might of, must of, should of, and would of* are illiterate vulgarisms for *could have, may have, might have, must have, should have, and would have*.

**Off of.** The "of" is unnecessary.

Wrong: When we took the cover *off of* the box we noticed that the contents seemed to be damaged.

Right: When we took the cover *off* the box we noticed that the contents seemed to be damaged.

**One.** "Not *a one* returned to work." Omit the "a."

**Ones.** Do not say *the ones*, say *those*.

Wrong: *The ones* we have received are shop-worn.

Right: *Those* we have received are shop-worn.

**Only** is very commonly misplaced, so that the real meaning is not clear. Place *only* next to the word or phrase to be qualified.

Examples: He *only* signed the letter. (He did not dictate it.)

He signed *only* the letter. (He did not sign anything else.)

*Only* he signed the letter. (No one else signed it.)

He signed the letter *only*. (He did not sign anything else.)

**Ought.** See **Had.**

**Party** means a *person or group of persons taking part*.

It is incorrect when used to mean simply a person.

Wrong: The *party* who ordered the samples was Fred Jones.

Right: The *person* who ordered the samples was Fred Jones

Right: The contracting *parties* signed the lease.

Right: Each *party* to the contract was satisfied.

**Per cent.** should not be used as a noun; use *percentage*.

Wrong: Of those present *only* a small per cent. were from our house.

Right: Of those present *only* a small percentage were from our house.

**Plenty** is incorrect when used as an adverb.

Wrong: He is *plenty* good enough for us and should be for you.

Right: He is *quite* good enough for us and should be for you.

**Posted.** Use *inform* instead. Ledgers are *posted*. "He is well *informed* (not *posted*) on that point."

**Prefer** should be completed by *to*, *above*, or *before*; not by a "than" clause.

Wrong: We prefer to deal with you direct *than with any one else*.

Right: We prefer dealing with you direct *to dealing with any one else*.

**Practicable, practical.** Use *practical* in reference to persons who show skill, practice, knowledge, or experience; as, "A *practical* man." When *practical* is used as a thing it means *useful* as opposed to *theoretical*; as, "He has a *practical* experience in this field." *Practicable* is not used of persons but of things and means *capable of being put into practice*; as, "His idea is *practicable*."

**Principal, principle.** *Principal* (noun) means *a leader or chief; the employer of one who acts as agent; a sum on which interest accrues*. *Principal* (adjective) means *highest in character, rank, or importance*. *Principle* is used only as a noun and means *a general truth, information, or belief*.

The following sentences illustrate the correct use of these words:

The *principal* of this note must be paid by January 8.

He is the *principal* of the school.

The *principal* man whom you should see is the Secretary.

It is the *principle* of the case, which interests us.

**Provided, providing.** Do not use the participle *providing* (meaning *to furnish*) in place of the conjunction *provided* (meaning *on condition that, if*).

Wrong: *Providing* the firm is willing, I shall be glad to handle that.

Right: *Provided* the firm is willing, I shall be glad to handle that.

**Proposition** means *a thing proposed* or *the act of proposing*. Do not use for *work* or *task*.

Wrong: To handle those 40 salesmen is a hard *proposition*.

Right: To handle those 40 salesmen is a hard *task*.

**Proven** should not be used except as an adjective; otherwise use *proved*.\*

**Quantity** should not be used for *number*.

Wrong: We have had a large *quantity* of suits returned to us.

Right: We have had a large *number* of suits returned to us.

**Quite a few** is incorrectly used for *a good many* or *a considerable number*.

**Quite a little** is incorrectly used for *a considerable amount* or *a good deal*.

**Rarely ever.** Do not use. Say *rarely* or *hardly ever*.

Wrong: They *rarely ever* act as agents.

Right: They *rarely* act as agents; or, They *hardly ever* act as agents.

**Real.** Do not use for *very*.

Wrong: We consider this a *real* good offer.

Right: We consider this a *very* good offer.

**Reason is, the.** Such an expression as *the reason is* should not be completed with (1) a *because of* phrase; as, "The reason he did not agree to the contract was *because of* their impatience," (2) a *because* clause; as, "The reason he did not agree to the contract was *because* they were impatient," (3) a *due to* phrase; as, "The reason he did not agree to the contract was *on account of* their impatience." Complete it with a "that" clause; as, "The reason he did not agree to the contract was *that* they were impatient."

**Right away, right off.** Not in good use. Say *at once* or *immediately*.

**Same** (1). Do not use as a pronoun.

Wrong: We have received your order and shall fill *same* within five days.

Right: We have received your order and shall fill *it* within five days.

Wrong: We are sending you two extra parts. If you cannot use the *same* kindly return them to us.

Right: We are sending you two extra parts. If you cannot use *them* kindly return them to us.

(2). *Same* should not be used for *in the same way as*, or *just as*.

Wrong: You do not treat us *the same as* other customers.

Right: You do not treat us in the same way that you treat other customers.

(3). "I want the *same* make *that* (not *as*) I got before.

**Seem, can't seem.** See **Can't**.

**Seldom or ever.** Used incorrectly for *seldom or never*, or *seldom if ever*.

**Shall and will.** See page 34 *et seq.*

**Should of.** See **Of**.

**Show up.** Vulgarly used in the sense of *appear, come, be present*, or in the sense of *show or expose*.

Wrong: He *showed up* at the last minute.

Right: He *appeared* at the last minute.

Wrong: We are going to *show up* your last transaction.

Right: We are going to *expose* your last transaction.

**Sit, set** are frequently confounded. *Sit* means *to remain in a certain state of repose, to fit*; *set* means *to put, to place*.

<i>Present</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Present Perfect</i>
I sit	I sat	I have sat
I set	I set	I have set

Wrong: The top part of the machine *sets* securely in the base.

Right: The top part of the machine is *set* (or *sits*) securely in the base.

With *set* always use an object.



**Size.** Do not use *size* as an adjective; use *sized* or *of size*.

Wrong: We are sure that you can use these different *size* plates.

Right: We are sure that you can use these different *sized* plates.

Wrong: We have in stock every *size* tire.

Right: We have in stock tires of *every size*.

**Size up.** Vulgarly used in the sense of *judge, estimate*, as, "It didn't take a long time *to size up* his proposition."

**Some** is often incorrectly used for *somewhat*, as, "This plot of land is *somewhat larger* than French's" (not, *some larger*).

**Some place.** Misused for *somewhere*. "He put it *some-where*" (not, "*some placé*").

**Sort of.** See **Kind of**.

**Stop** means to *cease*. Do not use it in the sense of *stay*, as, "Do not *stop* long in Michigan."

**Such** (1). Do not use *who, which, or that* in the relative clause completing *such*; use *as*.

Wrong: He offered to complete the transaction under *such* conditions *that* we proposed.

Wrong: *Such* officers *who* see fit should sign and mail the enclosed card.

(2). When *such* is completed by a result clause use *that* alone, not *so that*.

Wrong: We are bound by *such* an agreement *so that* we are unable to do business with you.

Right: We are bound by *such* an agreement that we are unable to do business with you.

**Take** used in connection with other verbs is sometimes superfluous.

Wrong: *Take and use* the bottle of polish which we are sending to you.

Right: *Use* the bottle of polish which we are sending to you.

**Than** is often improperly used for *when*, as, "We had hardly received your letter *than* we received the delayed shipment."

**That.** Do not use as an adverb, as, "We did not know it was *that* bad." "I had gone *that* far when I was recalled."

**That** (relative pronoun). See **Who**.

**That there.** See **This here**.

**Therefore, therefor.** Often confounded. *Therefore* means *for that reason*, as, "We have decided on this for five years and *therefore* recommend it." *Therefor* means *for that* or *this*, *for it*, as, "The party of the second part agrees to pay *therefor* the sum of \$500."

**These here.** See **This here**.

**These kind, these sort.** See **Kind**.

**This.** Should not be used as an adverb. See **That**.

**This here, these here, that there, those there.** Do not use. Say, *this, these, those, and that*.

**Through.** Do not use in the sense of *finished, left*.

Wrong: We are not *through* with the construction of the building.

Right: We have not *finished* with the construction of the building.

Wrong: He got *through* with us in April.

Right: He *left* us in April.

**Till, until** are interchangeable when the meaning is *to the time of*.

**To** (preposition). Is often carelessly used for *too* (adverb); as, "He has gone *to* far in this matter" (for "*too* far").

**Too** alone should not modify a past participle, as, "I was *too* (much) disturbed to do anything." Insert *much*.

**Transpire.** Not correctly used in the sense of *occur, or happen*. It means *to become known*.

Wrong: The fire broke out at 12 o'clock and *transpired* when everyone was at lunch.

Right: The fire broke out at 12 o'clock and *occurred* when everyone was at lunch.

**Up** should not be used with such words as *divide, finish, open, settle, write*; as, "He *finished up* his work and then *wrote up* his report."

**Was, were.** Use *were*, not *was*, after *as if*, *as though*, or *wish*.

Right: He looked as though he *were* angry. I wish he *were* going with us.

**Way** should be used with a preposition.

Wrong: Why did you act *that way*?

Right: Why did you act *in that way*?

**What** is often incorrectly used for *that*.

Wrong: I have no doubt *but what* you have handled the matter in the best way.

Right: I have no doubt *that* you have handled the matter in the best way.

**Where** is often misused for *that*.

Wrong: I saw in your report *where* we should use a new system.

Right: I saw in your report *that* we should use a new system.

**Which.** Do not use *which* as a relative pronoun in referring to persons. (See **Who**.)

Wrong: The employees *which* signed that paper ought to be discharged.

Right: The employees *who* signed that paper ought to be discharged.

**Who, which, that** (as relative pronouns). *Who* relates usually to persons; as, "We shall send our attorney *who* will try to make an agreement with you." It is better to use *which* in referring to animals. *Which* relates to animals and things; as, "The cattle *which*

we shipped you should have been looked after more carefully en route." "Some of the books *which* we received were damaged." *That* relates to persons, animals, and things; as, "The only man *that* can do this kind of advertising is Frank Worth." "Prices ruled low on all the calves *that* we sent to Chicago." "The only point *that* you should remember is the quality of this silk." *Who* and *which* introduce both restrictive and unrestrictive clauses; *that*, usually a restrictive clause only. (See Rule 304.)

**Whoever, whomever.** The pronoun *who* or *whoever* when the subject of a finite verb should not be attracted into the objective case by a verb or a preposition preceding the clause introduced by *who* or *whoever*.

Wrong: This ought to go to *whomever* can best use it.

Right: This ought to go to *whoever* can best use it.

Wrong: *Whom* do you think will be there?

Right: *Who* do you think will be there?

See page 20 also.

**Whose** is the possessive case of *who* and not of *which*.  
Do not use it in referring to inanimate things.

Wrong: I turned to the next page on *whose* margin certain figures had been written.

Right: I turned to the next page on the margin of which certain figures had been written.

**Without** should not be used in the sense of *unless*.

Wrong: I told him not to do that *without* he first asked me.

**Write up.** See **Up**.

## VI. TONE AND VARIETY

### *The Tone of the House*

**232.** The character of a business house should so permeate its correspondents that they unconsciously put into their letters a tone that conforms with that character.

**233.** Tone is secured by the choice of words, by sentence and paragraph structure, and by the spirit or style of the writer.

**234.** The character of the letters sent out by firms like banking and bond houses should be dignified and conservative.

Example: "In case you conclude to purchase additional government bonds to take the place of the one-year 3% certificates of indebtedness maturing next November, we trust that you will correspond with us regarding the bonds you will require in substitution.

"We shall be pleased to have you telegraph at our expense when ready for definite quotations which we will make you subject to immediate acceptance upon your part. In the event that you buy the government bonds from us, we shall be glad to attend to all the details of substituting them for the certificates in your circulation account."

### *Editorial Manual for Correspondents*

**235.** Every letter sent out by a business house should have a certain atmosphere of quality and distinction, and

should be written in a certain tone. The quality, distinction, and tone to be used, are determined by the policy and standing of the business house.

**236.** Since in many concerns various correspondents handle the letters, it is only natural that each correspondent unconsciously puts into his letters his own personality. His peculiar mannerisms and characteristics, good, bad and indifferent, continually crop out in his correspondence. These correspondents should be given a set of rules which specifically instruct and direct them in regard to the policy to be adhered to in collecting accounts, in sales-letters, in answering complaints, etc., and show them how to handle the different points that come up in correspondence work, so that all the letters of the house may be uniform in quality and have a consistent personality—the tone of “the house.” The adoption of such uniform policy in the handling of letters means (1) that the letters will be handled more quickly and economically since the individual correspondent need not stop to decide on the attitude taken by him, and (2) the quality of the letters will be raised, for they will be written according to instructions laid down by the head correspondent or the head of the department. Only by the use of such a uniform policy, systematically applied, can a business house having many correspondents be assured of a high standard of letter writing.

**237.** This uniformity in policy and in quality can be secured by adopting and enforcing a set of rules and by pointing out to the correspondent the standing, the character, and the traditions of the house. These rules are divided

into three classes, as follows: (1) those rules which determine the attitude of the writer; for example, his attitude in answering a complaint letter; (2) those rules that relate to the handling of subject matter, for example, arguments to be used in sales letters, and to the avoidance of certain hackneyed expressions; and (3) those rules that relate to the mechanical make up of a letter. (See Page 150.)

**238.** This Handbook of Business English may be used in part as an editorial manual for correspondents.

**239.** The attitude of the writer or correspondent, since it should be the same as the attitude and policy of the house, is determined by the nature of the business and by the ideas of the management.

#### *Style Adapted to the Reader*

**240.** The English used must be adapted to the reader. A certain spirit or tone in the letter is essential to the best results. The one writing or dictating the letter should consciously strive to use English best suited to the reader. The tone of a letter adds greatly toward making a favorable impression.

**241.** A sales-letter to ladies should be polished, courteous, and non-colloquial in style.

Example: "The materials themselves give a wide range of choice. Some of the most elaborate gowns show supple shot velvets or broché velvets—richly ornamented and embroidered in crystal, in silver and gold—or shimmering satins overlaid with filmy chiffons, gold-threaded nets and malines, and the sheerest of Venetian and Chantilly laces.



"A bit less ethereal are the chiffon taffetas, the failles, the crêpe de chînes and brocaded crêpes—in many instances the vogue for printed effects and heavily brocaded silks is proclaimed.

"Touches of fur, marabou, swansdown, a sash, a corsage bouquet—there are innumerable decorative *motifs* that give each costume the novelty which the French so adore."

**242.** An example of the tone that should *not* be used in sales letters to women, is that given in the letter, Figure 1, on the opposite page.

(This letter was sent to women living in small towns, whose husbands were rated as being worth \$10,000 and over. In such towns, women coming under this classification would be regarded as well-to-do, but of this the writer of the letter apparently took no heed. The letter was by no means adapted to the class of women to which it was mailed, either in language, in tone, or in examples of the uses of the Ready Light.

The language used in this sales letter is poorly chosen, and in many places is ungrammatical. This of itself would create on the women readers an unfavorable impression in regard to the article offered for sale.

The tone of the letter is ill-adapted because of the rough and unpolished style of presentation. It is far better, in writing to women, to use a style and language above rather than below their own.

The choice of the examples of the uses of the Ready Light is poor, and gives rise to unpleasant suggestions.

The letter, as quoted on Page 119, failed to bring results partly because it was a part of a poor selling campaign, but mostly because it was written in a tone and style ill-suited to its readers.)

Mrs. F. B. Smith,  
Ottumwa, Iowa.

Dear Madam:

You know how difficult it is to fry meat by artificial light, and get it browned "just so." The kitchen light is usually way back in the center of the room, and the cook is constantly getting in her own light. Don't jump on the cook. It isn't her fault.

The Ready Light can be placed right over the top of the stove and every bit of the light thrown down upon the cooking. Everything will be light as day, no more need for burned or under-done meat.

By a little ingenuity, the Ready Light can be hung so as to light up the top surface of any kitchen stove, no matter what kind or how arranged. My wife, always hangs it over a high-back chair as in Position "A". (See circular). If the light tilts down too much, a handkerchief or dish-cloth placed inside the curved base will hold it up in the proper position.

Try the Ready Light way of preparing supper tonight.

If you have any men-folks who shave themselves, have them try the Ready Light over the mirror.

For playing the piano at night, the Ready Light cannot be excelled. Place it over the back of a chair or rocker as suggested for use at the kitchen stove.

For sewing at night, or studying, the Ready Light concentrates every bit of the light on your work, and at the same time keeps it out of your eyes. The same amount of work can be accomplished in much less time, and with half the fatigue.

I will not enumerate further. After you have owned a Ready Light for a week or two, hundreds of ways to use it will have suggested themselves.

Do you not think it is a Ready Light?

Yours respectfully,

FIG. I

*Example of Incorrect Tone*

**243.** In advertisements selling goods to women of the better educated classes, one means, for example, of securing good tone is by the use of French phrases or words. When they are used, however, they should not be followed immediately by the translation. This should be introduced less obviously. Such an expression as "Perrine's *La Neige* (French for snow) White Washable Gloves," is too bald. An example of correct use is as follows:

*"Les Français ne sont jamais contents seulement de faire. Ils créent. Djer-Kiss Talc is strictly a French creation. It is made in France, the home of daintiness. It is made of French talc, which is the finest in the world. It is perfumed with Djer-Kiss, the chef d'œuvre of Kerkoff, the master perfumer of Paris."*

**244.** Letters to farmers should be simple in style, frank and colloquial in tone.

Example: If you could only see one of my stump-pullers in operation, I know you would not hesitate a minute about having one, too. I am convinced that no up-to-date farmer can see one without wanting it. In order to make it possible for the people in your locality actually to see one of my machines working, I am going to make an offer to a few men in each neighborhood so remarkable, so sure, so absolutely without risk, that it will put at least one exhibition stump-puller in every neighborhood in the country.

**245.** The sporty and slangy tone may be used in letters written to sell sporting articles. It may also be used with success in other class advertisements and letters; for example, those addressed to smokers.

"Whar nature leaves off on Burley, work on VELVET begins—cultivatın', pickın', an' choosin', to get the best an' richest leaves. Then th' curin' that lasts mo' than two years an' puts that fine, mellow, aged-in-th'-wood smoothness into VELVET, The Smoothest Smoking Tobacco."

#### FIRST OF ALL—

You buy a jimmy pipe. Get one that chums-up with your spirit right off the bat, natural-like. Then lay a dime against a tidy red can of Prince Albert tobacco that's all pleasing and fragrant and fresh. A match!—and you're off!

Get jimmy pipe joy'us quick as you can beat it up the pike to any store that sells tobacco. . . .

**246.** Once the tone or character of the letter has been decided upon, this tone should be adhered to throughout. Any false note that is struck destroys the effect of the whole letter.

Example: "The Merchants' City Bank of New York has purchased bonds of the above loan to the amount of five million dollars, description of which is contained in the enclosed circular.

"We are able to offer these bonds with accumulated interest less the broker's commission of  $\frac{1}{4}\%$  at 94. We desire to make you an advance offer of any part at this figure. *This is pretty good stuff, don't you think? Why not take on a line of it?*"

**247.** Besides the style in which the writer adapts himself to the reader; besides the established tone in the correspondence of a business house, there is still another tone which comes from the business sense and which applies to its ordinary letters. This is the courteous, agreeable, and

positive note so conducive to good business relations. Take, for example, the possible ways of beginning a letter answering a complaint:

Negative: We must say that we are surprised to learn from your letter of Jan. 19 that you are dissatisfied with your purchase from us on Jan. 14.

Neutral: Your letter of Jan. 19 in regard to a shirtwaist purchased from us on Jan. 14 has been received.

Positive: Thank you for your candid letter of Jan. 19, in which you call our attention to the fact that the shirtwaist you purchased on Jan. 14 does not come up to the usual high quality of goods handled by our store.

Note: The third, the positive beginning, is by far the best because its tone gets the reader into the right spirit to read the rest of the letter. Remember that the first paragraph of the letter is usually the most important. From it the reader shapes his entire attitude.

### Variety

**248.** Variation in the length and structure of sentences not only stimulates the attention, but makes interesting even the dullest subject. This is the only practical method of imparting to a dull recital of facts (e. g., letters selling bonds), the interest so necessary in certain forms of business correspondence.

**249.** Sameness or monotony of construction is a fatal fault in many letters, for it takes the life out of the most interesting subject. In like manner, the constant use of any one form of sentence or the steady recurrence of the same kind of construction in sentences, both annoys the reader and distracts his attention. Since most sentences are

written in the loose style, it is safe to advise the writer to use the periodic style, so far as can be done without apparent artifice. The more the writer uses the short staccato sentence, the more interesting becomes his style.

**250.** Common violations of the principle of variety are:

- a. The frequent use of compound sentences composed of two members of about the same length joined by *and* or *but*.

Examples: "Two weeks ago we wrote to you about our reliable watch *and* we hope that you have been interested in it. To-day we are sending to you testimonials from many people who have bought these watches *and* we know that you will be impressed when you see them. You may still be a little sceptical about this watch *and* you may say that we can't live up to our offer. You should read carefully the enclosed testimonials *and* you will then know that we do live up to our agreements."

"We have sent to you by the last mail a copy of our pamphlet *and* we hope that you will read it carefully. You will notice that a full description of the adding machine is given on page 10 *and* you will find it is very complete. You will find on the same page an answer to your question *and* you will see how easily the machine is operated."

Note: It is important to remember that coördination is not a rhetorical fault. The real fault lies in the use of isolated compound sentences, each consisting of two clauses joined by the same conjunction, "and." We should carefully distinguish between those cases in which this structure best expresses the thought and those in which it represents no thought at all.

- b. The frequent use of participial or absolute phrases (Rule 107).

Examples: Early copy means early proof, *avoiding* the necessity for hasty revision. Therefore kindly see that we receive your copy by May 22, this *being* the last day. Remember that advertisements of 1,500 lines or more will be placed on a separate page, the remainder of the page *containing* interesting news matter.

c. The frequent use of *so* for the purpose of compounding sentences.

Examples: We understood that you were interested in our trip, *so* we sent you our pamphlet and circulars. This trip, you will recall, is being conducted by the University, *so* it will not be a money making scheme. And too, the party is under the leadership of well-known civic experts, *so* you can be assured of a profitable experience.

d. The frequent use at the beginning of the sentence of *after this*, *after that*, *there is*, *there are*, and *now*.

Example: *There are* two special designs featured in E. & W. Shirts. *There are* in these same shirts materials unsurpassed for workmanship. *There are* also other points of superiority which we have no space to mention.

e. The frequent use at the beginning of a sentence of a connective such as, *therefore*, *however*, and *nevertheless*.

Example: If your workrooms are not properly ventilated, your employees cannot do efficient work. *Therefore* you lose money because you lose service. *Therefore* it would be wise to have installed one of our electric suction fans. *Therefore* call me up or write to me.

f. Too frequent use of the personal pronoun I.

## VII. THE OUTLINE

**251.** In the writing of a long report, an important business letter, or an article, the outline is of importance. Not only will the writer's time be saved, but the actual labor of composition will be easier and in the end the result will be more satisfactory.

**252.** An outline is a properly coördinated arrangement of the important facts which are to be included. In other words, it is a condensed form of notes. A common fault is that it is made too soon after notes have been taken on the subject. The material should have been collected some little time and the subject allowed to shape itself before the outline is given an opportunity to crystallize. The three essentials of a good working outline are: *unity*, *simplicity*, and *proportion*.

**253.** The principle of unity is applied by seeing that one topic leads to another and that all pertain to the same topic. Care should be taken to see that nothing is included in the main topic which is a part of the subordinate topic.

**254.** The outline should be simple in construction. No wearisome details should be included, and there should be no confusion of topics.

**255.** The principle of proportion as here applied means that the main ideas must be made main topics; subordinate ideas must not be made principal topics, but sub-topics of main topics. Sub-ideas should be properly subordinated.



**256.** The five steps taken in the making of an outline are:

- (1) The statement of the definitely limited subject.
- (2) The selection of the point of view.
- (3) The selection and arrangement of the main topics.
- (4) The subdivision of the main topics.
- (5) Revision to secure clearness, unity, simplicity, and proportion.

**257.** An example of an outline for a sales report is as follows:

*Report on Sales Department of Standard Gear  
Motor Co.*

Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

**I. The Present Selling System—**

1. Tabulated comparison of sales, this year with last.
2. Field and prospects.
3. Methods of selling.
  - a. Office sales.
  - b. Salesmen on salary and commission.
  - c. Agency sales.

**II. Faults of the Present System—**

1. Small number of salesmen results in:
  - a. An inconsiderable amount of territory covered.
  - b. Limited number of prospects followed up and sold.
  - c. Competitors entering field.
2. Waste of 50% of salesman's time caused by:
  - a. Lack of advertising.
  - b. Lack of follow-up letters.
3. Lack of coöperation with agencies.

## III. Remedies Suggested—

1. Increase in salesmen so that:
  - a. More territory may be covered.
  - b. More prospects may be followed up and sold.
  - c. Competition may be met.
2. Appropriation for advertising and follow-up campaigns to save 50% of salesman's time.
3. Closer coöperation with agencies.

## IV. Probable Results—

- i. Increase in sales because of larger force of salesmen.
2. The advertising and follow-up systems will result in:
  - a. Direct sales from advertising and follow-up systems.
  - b. Increase of 100% in selling power of present salesmen.
3. Increased sales through agencies.

## V. Recommendations—

1. Increase in number of salesmen.
2. Appropriation for:
  - a. Advertising campaign.
  - b. Follow-up campaign.
3. Better treatment of agencies.

## Conclusion.

**258.** After the outline has assumed the above form, it should be carefully scrutinized for any defects in its mechanical and logical arrangement.

## VIII. BUSINESS REPORTS

### *Definition of a Business Report*

**259.** A business report is a statement which contains in logical form specific facts and figures pertaining to a certain phase of business. It may contain also the writer's recommendations or conclusions based on the facts given.

**260.** The purpose of a report is to convey information that is of use and that is to be used, and the writer should never lose sight of this fact. No report should be made unless it has some definite purpose or tries to convey some definite information.

**261.** A report implies a maker and a receiver. The latter is usually some one in authority who is to use the report and base a judgment upon the information contained in it. Accordingly, the function and purpose of the one who receives the report should determine its character and contents. Hence, a report to be made to go out to the stockholders of a company should be adapted to them and to their use. If the report is to go to the head of a technical department it need be adapted only to him.

**262.** The making of a report is of great importance to the reporter for the reason that it usually goes to someone in authority, who judges the reporter by his work. Reports are demanded of nearly everyone in business—sales-

men, managers, committees, secretaries, treasurers, experts, accountants, and so on.

**263.** The executive who desires a report, should select the man or men who have the opportunities and training which best fit them for getting the desired information.

### *Different Kinds of Reports.*

**264.** Reports range all the way from the short, published, bank reports and accountant's reports, which are nearly all figures, to those of consuls and others, which are mostly narration, description, and exposition. There is every grade of report from the mere presentation of facts or statistics up to dignified persuasion and the making of recommendations.

**265.** There are two forms of reports—the personal and the impersonal. The personal is used when dignity and formality need not be observed; the impersonal style is used when these characteristics are essential elements.

**266.** As a rule, a report which contains recommendations is more important than one containing merely figures. The former demands that the business judgment and knowledge of the writer be exercised; whereas, in the latter, only facts and figures are given. In a report making a recommendation, the writer should realize the responsibility that rests upon his judgment and should act accordingly.

### *Arrangement of the Business Report*

**267.** A business report is largely dependent for its value on the method of arrangement and presentation.

**268.** Both the logical and mechanical arrangement of the report should, therefore, be very carefully considered. The logical arrangement is necessary so that the thought may progress properly. The mechanical arrangement is necessary in order that the various topics may be easily found or referred to.

**269.** For convenience of reference the report should be properly displayed. It should have numerous sub-heads written in capitals, underlined, or in some other way separated from the body of the reading matter, so that they can be seen at a glance. Sometimes they are placed in the marginal space. At other times they are boxed by rules and placed in the reading matter in the margins. In every case, margins should be wide and paragraphs should be separated by an abundance of white space. The arrangement of these headings and topics is a most important consideration in a report. For further convenience, figures should be tabulated, and maps and diagrams inserted wherever possible.

**270.** Recommendations should be separated from and follow the facts on which they are based. A good arrangement is secured either by grouping all recommendations at the end of the report or by placing a recommendation at the end of each division of facts which necessitates one. If a report is long and involves the making of recommendations on several topics, it is better to place the recommendations throughout the report following each separate division of facts or statements. If the report is short they may be grouped at the end. In many cases where recommendations

are scattered throughout the report, they are summed up at the end.

**271.** Recommendations should not be hidden within a paragraph, but should be paragraphed separately.

Example: We therefore recommend that an appropriation of \$10,000 be made for advertising and follow-up campaigns.

We also recommend that the present sales force be increased to forty-two.

**272.** Recommendations should be simple, but definite, comparatively few in number, and should deal with only the essential points under discussion in the report.

**273.** The purpose and source of any report should decide the nature, form, and arrangement of its contents. For example, if it is informal and is to be seen only by one or two persons, it may be submitted in letter form. If the report is to be published for the benefit of stockholders, it must have an arrangement suitable for publication.

**274.** Nothing should be included in the report unless it pertains to the title and is common to it. Likewise, each sub-title must cover every point contained in the passage which it titles.

**275.** The beginning of a report should state its object, the ground to be covered, and the sources of facts stated (i. e., whether they have been obtained by personal observation, by talk with employees, or otherwise), and the authority by which the reporter is making the report. The end should

be a summary of the essential facts given and a review of the conclusions reached throughout.

### *An Example of a Presentation*

To the Board of Directors of the Standard Gear Motor Company,  
Gentlemen:

In compliance with the vote passed at your last meeting, January 21, 1914, that "The sales manager shall submit a report on the sales system now in use, together with his recommendations as to how his department may be improved," I herewith present a report entitled "Report on.....Company."

I have personally examined the condition of my department and have considered carefully every method whereby sales may be increased. I hope that the Board will take under special consideration the remedies suggested for the faults of our present selling system.

### *An Example of a Conclusion*

In conclusion, allow me to say that I hope the Board will pass favorably upon the system as outlined in this report and embodied in the recommendations, for I firmly believe, if the report be accepted and the recommendations passed, the Board will feel satisfied with the results.

Respectfully submitted,

---

An example of the mechanical arrangement of a *type-written* page of a business report is given in Fig. 2, on the opposite page.

have been realizing for some time past that they have been very much slighted by the company.

#### FAULTS OF THE PRESENT SELLING SYSTEM

Little territory covered because of small number of salesman

After a reading of the foregoing matter on the present selling system, it will be seen that certain great faults exist. Of these faults, the first that I desire to discuss is the fact that the small number of salesman composing our present sales force have been able to cover only a small part of the territory assigned to them.

Each of these salesman (they are on a salary and commission basis) has been assigned a certain district or territory in the United States. On personal investigation and from reports submitted I have found that of the twenty-four districts which have been allotted to salesman, only four have been anywhere near covered. By that I mean that only four salesman of twenty-four to whom exclusive territory had been assigned have been able to meet the known prospects of their districts. The following table shows in concrete form this wretched condition:

<u>Number of active prospects on the market</u>	<u>Number of prospects met by salesman</u>
18,500	7,200 -39%

Fig. 4

Limited number of prospects sold

Another fault with the present selling system is the limited number of prospects sold. From the table (Fig. 4) given

FIG. 2

*Example of a Typewritten Page of a Report*



*Clearness in the Business Report*

**276.** As the receiver of a report is usually some one in authority who can profitably use the information and recommendations, the essential qualities are clearness for the first reading and convenience for reference.

**277.** To obtain clearness, it is necessary for the writer to observe the principles of unity, coherence, and emphasis both in the report as a whole and in its separate divisions and paragraphs.

**278.** Use simple language; avoid technical terms unless they are adapted to and can be easily understood by the reader. Wherever possible use maps, charts, diagrams, and illustrations. They are more vivid than pages of description.

*Miscellaneous Points*

**279.** The most common errors of business reports are: (1) essentials included, but the report not clear; (2) non-essentials included; (3) essentials omitted.

**280.** For the sake of securing the necessary qualities and observing the principles of construction, an outline should be made by dividing the subject according to some principle and then sub-dividing the sections as this becomes necessary. The topics thus secured should be arranged in proper order and so far as possible should be expressed in definite sentences. (See Page 126.)

**281.** Proportion in a report means that **important** facts should be given as much space as is needed by them, and unimportant facts should be given as little space as possible.

**282.** Check up these four points in revising the business report: (1) arrangement (mechanical and logical); (2) proportion; (3) clearness; (4) conciseness.

### *Accountants' Reports*

**283a.** The accountant's report usually consists of four main divisions: (1) the presentation; (2) the certificate; (3) comments; and (4) exhibits and schedules.

**283b.** The presentation is the same as that in the ordinary report, but in addition includes a statement as to the contents of the whole report; e. g., "A certificate, ten pages of comments, and the following exhibits and schedules  
....."

**283c.** The certificate certifies that the audit has been made and is correct. This is signed by the accountant. These certificates are of two kinds—qualified and unqualified. A qualified certificate states that the correctness of the audit is vouched for, *subject however to the comments*. An unqualified certificate, as its name implies, is not thus qualified.

**283d.** The comments in many cases constitute the major part of the report and are of great importance to the reader. Comments have four main purposes: (1) They bring sharply to the attention of the reader a particular fact that might be passed by in the examination of the figures given in the schedules; (2) they make clear certain statements and figures in the schedules; (3) they describe the work that has been done, and may tell what has not been done; (4) they contain suggestions and recommendations, if recommendations are asked for.

## IX. PUNCTUATION AND CAPITALIZATION

### *The Comma (,)*

**284.** The comma indicates the smallest degree of separation in the sentence. It is required:

**285.** After words, phrases, and clauses where two or more are used in succession and the connectives are omitted.

Right: This machine is strong, well-made, and costs little.

**286.** To set off a proper name used in direct address.

Right: You will understand, Mr. Fall, that we have done our best in this matter.

**287.** To set off absolute participial phrases.

Right: Our factory having burned last week, we are unable to fill our orders.

**288.** To separate parenthetical or intermediate expressions from the context.

Right: His plans, although well made, have become known.

**289.** To set off appositives.

Right: He stayed at our headquarters, the Hotel Astor.

**290.** To indicate an ellipsis.

Right: Price, \$2.50.

Right: Some of the boxes were shipped yesterday; the rest, to-day.

**291.** To set off a geographical name explaining a preceding name.

Right: The goods were sent by mistake to St. Joseph, Mo., instead of to St. Joseph, Mich.

**292.** To separate two numbers.

Right: May 25, 1914.

Right: In 1912, 412 complaints were registered.

**293.** To separate a quotation from the other parts of the sentence.

Right: When we read in his letter, "I shall be sure to send this on Friday," we awaited his message.

**294.** Between two independent clauses connected by one of the simple conjunctions.

Right: The delay was our fault, but we could not help it.

**295.** To set off a dependent clause preceding its principal clause.

Note: A comma is usually not necessary when the dependent clause follows the principal clause.

Right: If we had received this in time, we should not have said anything.

Right: We should not have said anything if we had received this in time.

**296.** Before "not" when introducing an antithetical clause, phrase, or word.

Right: We have done this, not because it is our policy, but because this is an exceptional case.

Right: You should have taken his point of view, not your own.

**297.** To indicate separation between any sentence elements that might be misunderstood.

Wrong: Ever since we have refused to do business with them.

Right: Ever since, we have refused to do business with them.

**298.** To separate two adjectives modifying the same noun, if they are coordinate in thought.

Right: He is a willing, steady worker.

(The adjectives are coordinate in thought; both modify "worker.")

Right: We have shipped a large open boat.

(The adjectives are not coordinate in thought; "open" modifies "boat," but "large" modifies "open boat.")

**299.** Between the name of a person and his title.

Right: Perley Thorne, M. S.

Right: Frank Jones, cashier.

**300.** Between the terms of a series of words or phrases, if the conjunction be omitted.

Right: The plan of the bankers is to remain patient, calm.

**301.** Between repeated or similar words, or phrases.

Right: Down, down, down, have gone our prices.

**302.** To divide numbers in groups of three figures each.

Right: 82,934,567.

**303.** To separate from the rest of the sentence, a non-restrictive adjective clause.

Right: Louis, who has been with us only two years, is our best salesman.

**304.** When the phrases or group is restrictive no commas are used.

Right: An investment which nets about 4% is the one I am looking for.

Note: The following test may be used to decide whether a given clause or phrase is restrictive or non-restrictive: If the main assertion in the sentence remains unchanged in meaning and can stand alone if the clause or phrase be omitted, the clause or phrase is non-restrictive. If the main assertion of the sentence is incomplete and cannot stand alone in meaning unless the clause or phrase be present, the clause or phrase is restrictive. In the sentence "Louis, who has been with us only two years, is our best salesman," the clause "who has been with us only two years" may be omitted and the main assertion is unaffected, namely, "Louis is our best salesman." But in the sentence, "An investment which nets about 4% is the one I am looking for," the clause "which nets about 4%" cannot be omitted from the sentence, for then the sentence would read "An investment is the one I am looking for" which makes no sense. In this case, therefore, the clause is restrictive.

**305.** To separate the adverbs, *however*, *now*, *then*, *too*, *perhaps*, and *indeed* from the rest of the sentence when they are used as connectives.

Right: "Your first letter, however, has not reached us."

**306.** To separate similar words, even though the comma is not required by the sense or the grammatical construction.

Right: I tell you, you are hurting only yourself by your attitude.

**307.** In a series of three or more words where the conjunction *and* is used between the last two words.

Right: We have in stock a large quantity of purple, white, and blue silks.

Note: Many of the best writers do not agree on the use of the comma with the conjunction; for, as they say, the comma between words is used for *and*. If *and* is used, the comma is unnecessary. On the other hand, it seems illogical to omit the comma, for the intention is to make the three adjectives equally distinct. *White and blue silks* might mean silks, each of which is colored *white and blue*.

**308.** Do not use a comma before the first member of a series of sentence elements, unless it would be proper there, were there only one element instead of a series.

Wrong: This make of electric truck is being used, (1) by 17 department stores, (2) by 7 express companies, (3) by 8 bakers.

Right: This make of electric truck is being used (1) by 17 department stores, (2) by 7 express companies, (3) by 8 bakers.

**309.** The comma is not required after a short inversion or in any other place where the sense is unmistakable and no pause would be made in reading.

Wrong: In your letter, was a check for \$5.

Right: In your letter was a check for \$5.

**310.** The comma is not required before a substantive clause introduced by *that* when the governing verb immediately or very closely precedes the clause.

Wrong: He wrote, that he was returning the bonds.

Right: He wrote that he was returning the bonds.

**311.** Do not make the comma fault; that is, do not use a comma at the end of a grammatically complete assertion that is not joined to a following assertion by a conjunction. Use the period.

Wrong: You probably know how successful our sales agents have been in your state, this is the reason we are now establishing agencies in every town where we are not already represented.

Right: You probably know how successful our sales agents have been in your state. This is the reason we are now establishing agencies in every town where we are not already represented.

### *The Semi-Colon (;)*

**312.** The semi-colon indicates a wider degree of separation than the comma. It is used:

**313.** To separate the clauses of a compound sentence that are not joined by conjunctions.

Right: Your advertisement makes the customer glad to buy; the chance of betterment spurs your man to eagerness in work.

**314.** To separate the clauses of a compound sentence that are joined by a conjunction, only when it is desirable to indicate a very definite pause.

Right: We have informed you of the delay in shipment; but we have not told you yet of the reason for it.



**315.** Between the clauses of a compound sentence that are joined by one of the conjunctive adverbs, such as *accordingly, besides, hence, thus, therefore, then, still, also, nevertheless, moreover, and however*.

Wrong: This camera is made of aluminum, therefore, it is very light.

Right: This camera is made of aluminum; therefore, it is very light.

Wrong: You see, the motor had too much oil, then it got heated up and smoked like a volcano.

Right: You see, the motor had too much oil; then it got heated up and smoked like a volcano.

**316.** To separate the parts of a compound or a complex sentence when some of those parts are punctuated by commas.

Right: We have been informed that he has refused to honor his draft; that he has paid none of his bills, although heretofore, he has borne a good reputation in this respect; and that his bank account is greatly depleted.

**317.** To separate two elements of a simple or compound sentence when for any reason a comma would not make the relation between them immediately clear.

Wrong: If we had your territory, we should sell this product to every banker, and merchant, and nobody would escape us.

Right: If we had your territory, we should sell this product to every banker and merchant; and nobody would escape us.

*The Colon (:)*

**318.** The colon is the mark of equality: it indicates that what follows is equivalent to, or explains, what precedes. It is used:

**319.** Before the expressions, *as that is, namely, etc.*, and before the abbreviations, *viz., i. e., e. g., etc.*, when they are used to introduce a series of particular terms simple in form that are in apposition to the general term.

Right: Up to the present time, we have opened five new accounts: namely, the Johnson Company, The Smith Company, The White Company, The Jones Company, and the Stone-Black Company.

Note: Some authorities prefer the semi-colon here, and use the colon only when such an introductory word is understood but not expressed.

**320.** After a word, phrase, or clause of a sentence that is used as an introduction to something that follows, such as an enumeration, or an extended quotation.

Right: There are three points to be taken into consideration: production, transportation, and marketing.

Right: Mr. Jones said in his letter: "(A long quotation follows)."

**321.** After the formal salutation at the beginning of the letter: e. g., *Gentlemen*: When less formality is desired, a comma may be used: e. g., *My dear Fred*,

**322.** Between the hours and minutes in indicating time: e. g., 9:45 A. M.

*The Dash (—)*

**323.** The dash indicates an abrupt change of construction. It is used:

**324.** To indicate any sudden break in thought or speech.

Right: Your order for a sample pouch of ROYAL MIXTURE is greatly appreciated—by the way, have you received the sample package of tobacco that we mailed you?

**325.** In place of the comma, to set off more definitely some part of the sentence.

Right: We have been lacking something that we have needed most—efficiency.

**326.** As a substitute for parenthesis marks.

Right: The more you smoke our mixture—you will soon find this out—the more you like it.

**327.** Before a word which sums up the preceding part of a sentence.

Right: Wherever packing costs must be considered, wherever transportation charges are an item, wherever safety on goods in transit must be assured—the fibre board box is replacing the wooden one.

Right: "For the best cleanser, for an aid to a clear complexion, for something that is more than mere soap, there is only one thing—PALMOLIVE."

**328.** To connect extreme dates in specifying periods of time: e. g., 1910—1914.

**329.** Between short, simple sentences to increase the speed of the discourse: e. g., Look—just glance over these bargains—it will pay you—it means money to you.

*The Period (.)*

**330.** The period is the mark of finality. It indicates the conclusion of an idea.

**331.** The period is used at the end of every declarative sentence.

**332.** The period is placed after every abbreviation.

*The Exclamation Mark (!)*

**333.** The exclamation mark indicates strong feeling. It is used after an exclamatory sentence, clause, or interjection.

Right: Quality! That one word tells our story.

Right: These prices can't be beaten!

**334.** The exclamation mark in parentheses indicates irony.

Right: These are the facts (!) that convinced them.

*The Question Mark (?)*

**335.** The question mark is used after every question.

*Parenthesis Marks ( )*

**336.** Use the parenthesis marks to enclose a word or clause that is independent of the sentence.

Right: He said (at least he told me so) that he was here on the 15th.

### *Brackets [ ]*

**337.** Brackets are used to enclose an explanatory statement or word inserted by some other than the original writer of the sentence.

Right: Their letter reads: "We have decided to turn over this district to Mr. West [their new salesman] who will ....."

### *Quotation Marks (" ")*

**338.** Use quotation marks to enclose quotations of the exact words of another.

Wrong: They telegraphed "That they were coming."

Right: They telegraphed, "We are coming."

**339.** Use single quotations ( ' ' ) to enclose a quotation within a quotation.

Right: He writes: "I have seen Mr. John Lewis who said, 'I shall accept your offer.'"

**340.** Do not use quotation marks to enclose well-known nicknames, titles of books, proverbial phrases, or to indicate one's own literary invention.

**341.** When a quotation consists of several paragraphs, quotation marks should be placed at the beginning of each paragraph and at the end of the quotation. When a quotation mark and another form of punctuation both follow the

same word, see whether the punctuation mark belongs to the direct quotation or to the sentence as a whole. Examine the following:

Wrong: He wrote, "Where did you get that"?

Right: He wrote, "Where did you get that?"

Wrong: Did you say, "Ship at once?"

Right: Did you say, "Ship at once"?

**342.** The period and the comma, at the close of a quoted word or passage, are usually placed before the quotation marks, whether they belong only to the quotation or to the sentence as a whole.

Right: Don't use the word "ain't."

Right: "Ain't," used for "am not," is incorrect.

**343.** No comma or period need be used in addition to the quotation marks and the *question or exclamation mark*.

Wrong: Did he write, "We accept."?

Right: Did he write, "We accept"?

Wrong: We removed the sign, "Fire Sale!" and then left.

Right: We removed the sign, "Fire Sale!" and then left.

### *The Apostrophe (')*

**344.** Use the apostrophe to indicate the omission of letters: e. g., can't, doesn't, there's.

**345.** Use an apostrophe to form the possessive of *regularly* inflected nouns. In the singular number, the apostrophe precedes the *s*; in the plural, the apostrophe follows the *s*.

Right: The clerk's (singular) time. The clerks' (plural) time. (See Rule 57.)

**346.** An apostrophe is not used with the possessive adjectives *theirs, ours, yours, his, hers, its*.

*The Hyphen (-)*

**347.** Use the hyphen when a word must be divided at the end of a line. Such words as *also*, *besides*, *over*, and *through* should not be divided.

**348.** To divide certain compound words. For this, no rule can be laid down, because one must simply learn from observation and dictionaries what is the correct practice in individual cases.

**349.** Always use a hyphen with *to-day*, *to-morrow*, *to-night*, and *good-bye*.

**350.** Never divide words except at the end of a syllable. Always put the hyphen at the end of the first line, not at the beginning of the second.

**351.** Avoid what is called double punctuation; that is, the use of two marks of punctuation, as a comma and dash (,—) in the same place. This rule does not apply to the use of quotation marks.

*Capitalization*

**352.** Capitalize all proper names and adjectives derived from proper names.

Right: *German*, *Germany*, *Paris*, *Parisian*, *George*, etc.

**353.** Capitalize the important words in titles of books, and articles, as, *Imagination in Business*.

**354.** Capitalize the first word of every sentence, of every line of poetry, and of every complete sentence if quoted.

Right: "Can you ship by Friday?" he wrote, "We need it."

**355.** Capitalize all titles when used with proper nouns.

Right: Professor Smith, Postmaster Jones, Colonel Osborne, etc.

**356.** Capitalize the names, north, south, east, and west, only when referring to sections of country, not to direction.

Right: From Chicago we traveled north.

Right: Conditions in the East were not promising.

**357.** Capitalize the names of the days of the week and the names of the months, as, *Wednesday, Friday, January, March.*

Note: The words spring, summer, autumn, fall, and winter should not be capitalized unless personified or referred to specifically: e. g., *At this time we may expect spring weather; but, the Spring of 1915 holds good opportunities for our business.*

**358.** Capitalize the titles of governmental officers of high rank, even when used separately.

Right: The Secretary of State and the Attorney General met in New York City.



## X. THE MECHANICAL MAKE-UP OF A LETTER

### *Editorial Manuals for Typists*

**359.** Most good business houses have recognized the desirability of having all their correspondents follow certain rules so that their letters may be standardized in appearance. From their experience these houses have learned that where their letters are being handled by thirty or forty different correspondents and typists, there are thirty or forty different styles in the make-up of the letters going out from the house. By adopting a uniform policy in regard to the make-up of a letter and by impressing upon the correspondents the fact that these rules should be followed, so that the mechanical arrangement of a letter may be always the same, these houses have secured a definite form of letter.

**360.** It is wise, therefore, for any business house that has not a manual of rules to devise one. From the following pages on the Mechanical Make-Up of a Letter, which cover the most important usages of the best business houses of the present day, the head correspondent can choose those rules which he desires to make use of. These rules can then be typed out and a copy given to each correspondent and typist, or this book itself can be used as a manual. If it is used, the head correspondent should indicate, in cases where there is a choice in arrangement, the arrangement he prefers to have used. In this way all letters can be standardized in appearance.

*The Outward Appearance of the Letter*

**361.** The outward appearance of a letter makes the first impression on the reader. In other words, the general appearance of the letter is the first appeal that it makes to the average man. It is important, therefore, that the letter shall present as good an appearance as possible. The general appearance of a letter has to do with all the externals that catch the reader's eye, such as arrangement, typing (or hand writing), paper, and so on. These externals are called the mechanical make-up of a letter.

**362.** The kind of paper as to size, color, and quality used in business correspondence depends upon the following points: the person or class of persons to whom the letter is sent, the business house from which it comes, the purpose of the letter, and the cost. In every case paper should be selected which will meet the expectations of the recipient. In ordinary business correspondence the paper is a sheet  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$  inches to fit the standard envelope  $6\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$  inches. It is unruled and preferably white or of some light tint. In interdepartmental work, paper of different colors is used to show from what department the letter came and to help in the handling. The letter that goes outside the business firm should be of as good a grade as the firm can afford to use. Bond papers are most extensively used by business firms.

**363.** In sales-letter work, results have shown that the kind of paper used should be adapted to the class of persons to whom the letter is sent. To women, to the professional classes, to the wealthy, and so on, only the best quality of paper should be sent. A note-paper size, smaller

than the ordinary  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$  inch business letter-head is used, with envelopes to match. With farmers and with others on whom little impression is made by external appearances, a lower quality of paper is used. Variations in size and color, however, are used to secure different effects with these classes.

**364.** The mechanical make-up of a letter has six parts, the heading, the inside address, the salutation, the body of the letter, the complimentary close, and the signature.

#### *The Printed Heading*

**365.** The business letter-head gives the name of the firm, its address, the nature of the business, and sometimes the names of the officers. It may also contain the telephone number and other essential information. It should never contain unessential facts since the heading is not the important part of the letter and should not be made so by colored pictures of the products or buildings of the firm, and long lists of directors. The simpler the letter-head, the better chance has the message in the body of the letter to secure the undivided attention of the reader. It should not occupy more than one-fifth of the sheet and should not extend down the margins for advertising purposes.

**366.** Headings printed in script are not easily read and are out of harmony with the typewritten letter.

**367.** The head may be lithographed, engraved, or printed, and the color should usually be black. Other colors are sometimes effectively used, but black ink on white paper is the safe and correct form.

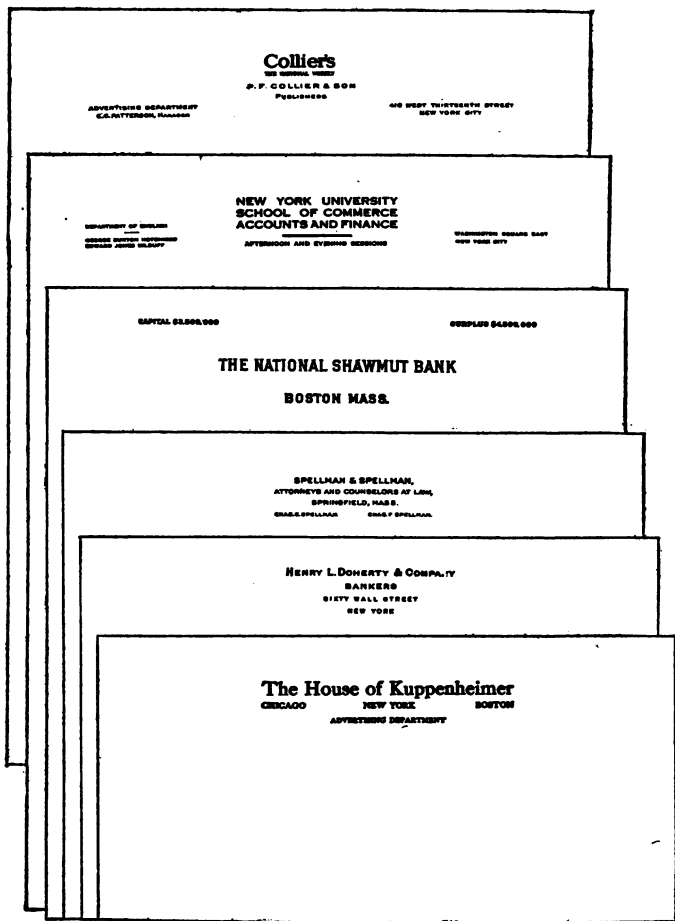


FIG. 3

*Examples of Good Letter Heads*

*Written Heading*

**368.** When the heading is written by hand it takes the following forms:

25 West Eighth St.,  
New York City,  
July 8, 1914.

or

25 West Eighth St.,  
New York City,  
July 8, 1914.

**369.** It will be noted that this heading contains the street address, the city address, the state address, and also the date. The heading should be placed at the top of the letter close to the right hand margin.

Note: It is a practice of some writers to omit all punctuation at the ends of the several lines of the written heading.

**370.** It is better never to abbreviate the name of the state when the abbreviation is likely to be confused with the abbreviation of the name of another state.

Wrong: St. Joseph, Mo.

Right: St. Joseph, Missouri.

**371.** No word or sign should be placed before the street number.

Wrong: #33 Main St.,  
Waterbury, Connecticut.

Wrong: No. 33 Main St.,  
Waterbury, Connecticut.

**372.** The street and avenue numbers up to and including ten should be spelled out in full.

Wrong: 754 5th Avenue.

Right: 754 Fifth Avenue.

**373.** The date should consist of the month, the number of the day, and the number of the year. Do not use a number for the month and do not abbreviate the year.

Wrong: 8-5-'14.

8/5/'14.

Right: August 5, 1914.

Note: Although on the face of it, the use of the number of the month and of the year seems to be more efficient than the use of the month written out in full, nevertheless, the reader is often confused in trying to find out exactly what month is meant. In many European countries 8-5-'14 would be read the 8th of May, 1914.

**374.** In ordinary business letters the numbers and the date should not be written out in full.

Wrong: May fifth, Nineteen hundred and fourteen.

Note: In certain cases, however, such as official letters, the date is spelled out to secure a greater formality.

**375.** The number of the day should not be followed by *d*, *nd*, *rd*, *st*, or *th*.

Incorrect: May 5th, 1914.

Correct: May 5, 1914.

Note: This rule holds good when referring in the body of the letter to the date.

**376.** The entire heading even though it be short should never be written on one line. As a rule, the date is on a separate line.

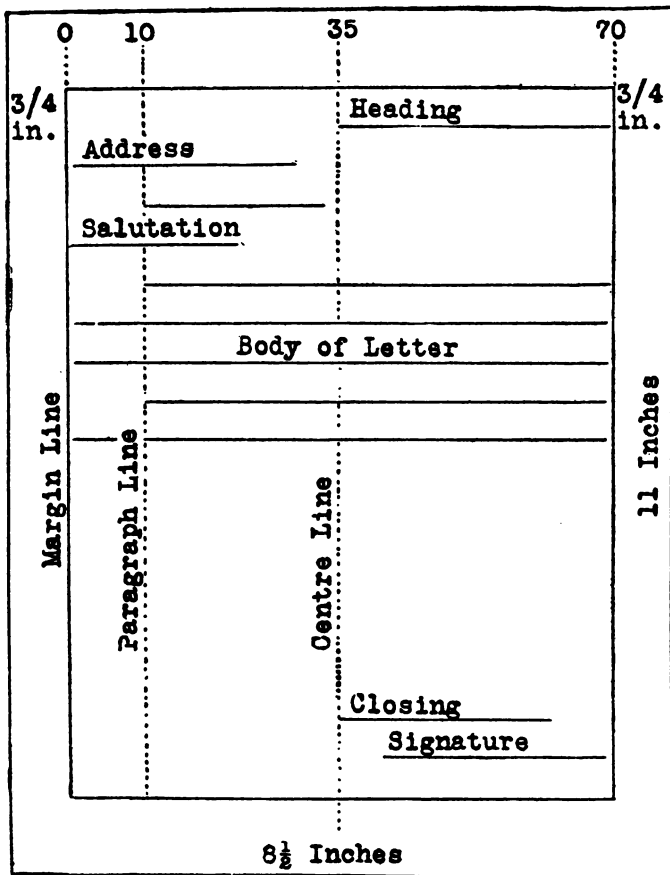


FIG. 4

*The Mechanical Arrangement of a Letter*

*Inside Address*

**377.** The name and address of a person to whom the letter is directed is placed at the left hand side of the page below the heading. Its distance below the heading depends upon the arrangement of the matter in the body of the letter. These two forms are used:

The Smith Hardware Company,  
35 Broadway,  
New York City.

or

The Smith Hardware Company,  
35 Broadway,  
New York City.

**378.** The inside address contains the name of the firm and its address, consisting of the street and number, and the city and state. The street address need not be given, but the best usage is to include it.

**379.** Do not use the word *city* alone in the inside address.

Wrong: Mr. John Jones,  
415 Seventh Avenue,  
City.

**380.** According to custom some title precedes the name of the person or firm. The commonest titles are: Mrs., Miss, Mr., Messrs., Dr., Hon., Rev., Prof.



**381.** The title *Esq.* (Esquire) follows the name of a person. In business letters, however, it is at present very little used. When it is used, omit the title *Mr.*

Wrong: Mr. Francis T. Jones, Esq.

Right: Francis T. Jones, Esq.

or

Mr. Francis T. Jones.

**382.** It should be noted that the title *Miss* is not now considered an abbreviated form and is therefore not followed by a period.

**383.** The title *Messrs.* is an abbreviation of Messieurs. A common error is to write *Messers.* or *Mess.*

**384.** *Messrs.* is used as a title in addressing two or more persons engaged in business under a firm title, but is not used when addressing under an impersonal corporation title.

Right: Messrs. Meyer and Ayers,  
Chicago, Illinois.

or

Meyer and Ayers,  
Chicago, Illinois.

Wrong: Messrs. U. S. Steel Corporation.

Right: The U. S. Steel Corporation.

**385.** Such initial titles as *Ph.D.*, *M.A.*, etc., and titles such as *President*, *Secretary*, *Cashier*, etc., follow the name of the person addressed; as, Prof. Perley Thorne, M.S., New York University, New York City.

Right: Mr. J. P. Morgan, President,  
Jones, Morgan Company,  
Waterbury, Conn.

or

J. P. Morgan, President,  
Jones, Morgan Company,  
Waterbury, Conn.

**386.** The inside address of a letter presenting a report or the like is as follows:

To the President and Board of Directors  
of the Manhattan Brass Company,  
New York City, New York.

Gentlemen:

or

Sirs:

**387.** In official letters the inside address is placed in the lower left hand part of the letter, slightly below the signature but beginning at the left hand margin.

**388.** Many firms do not put the street address of the addressee in the inside address. Of course it is necessary to have the inside address contain the street number if a window envelope is used.

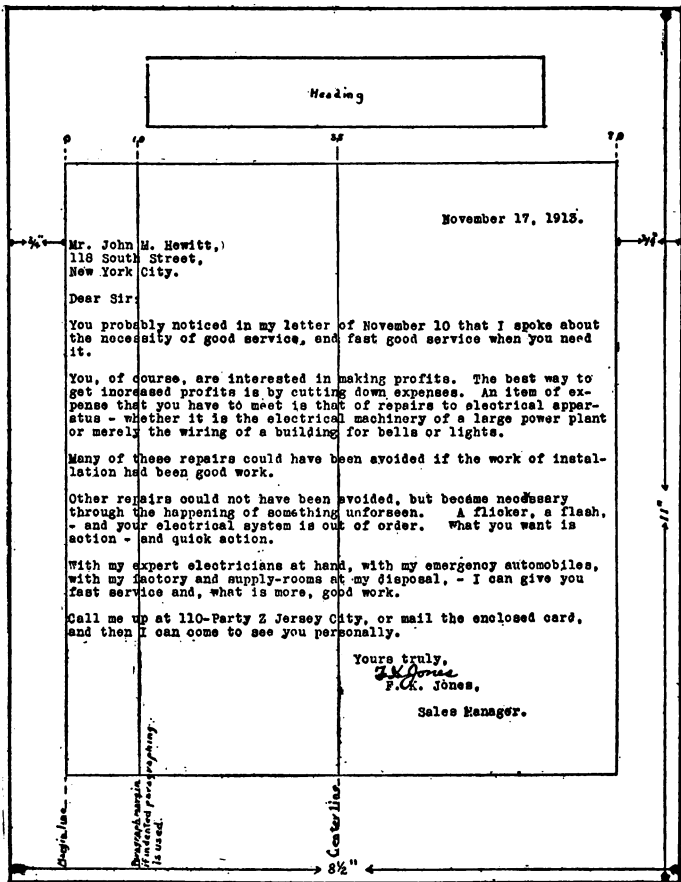


FIG. 5

*The Mechanical Arrangement of a Letter*

*The Salutation*

**389.** The complimentary address at the beginning of a letter is named the salutation. In business letters it is practically limited to four forms: *Dear Sir*, *Gentlemen*, *Dear Madam*, and *Ladies* or *Mesdames*. *Dear Madam* is used in addressing a woman, whether married or unmarried. More formality is shown by the use of the salutation *My dear Sir* and *My dear Madam*. Note that the first letter of the second word is not a capital. In exceptional cases, as in writing to government officials, the plain and highly formal *Sir* is used. If the writer is personally acquainted with the addressee or has corresponded with him before, he may use *My dear Mr. Fox* or *Dear Mr. Fox*.

**390.** The salutation should be written flush with the left-hand margin and in alignment with the first line of the address. It occupies a line by itself:

Brooks Brothers,  
936 Broadway,  
New York City.

Gentlemen:

**391.** Never use the salutations *Dear Friend*, *My dear friend*, and *Dear Miss*.

**392.** Do not use the abbreviation *Messrs.* as a salutation.

Wrong: Rogers Peet Co.,  
New York City, New York.

Messrs:

Right: Rogers Peet Co.,  
New York City, New York.

Gentlemen:

**393.** *Dear Sirs* has of recent years become obsolete.

**394.** In addressing such firms as *John Wanamaker* or *John Butler, Inc.*, the correct salutation is *Gentlemen* because these firms are corporations. This is the correct form also when a firm is composed of men.

**395.** Never use a name alone as a salutation.

Wrong: Mr. John Heaton:  
Will you let me know.....

Right: My dear Mr. Heaton:  
Will you let me know.....

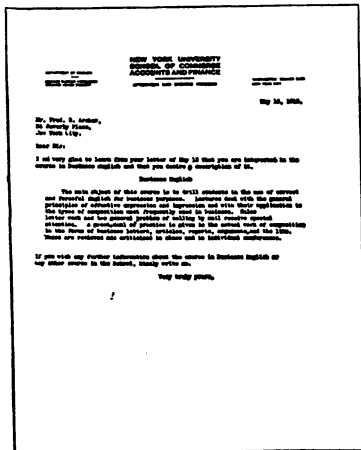
**396.** Avoid such abbreviated forms as *D'r.*, *Gents*, *S'r*.

**397.** The salutation is followed by a colon, or a comma, never by a semi-colon. The dash is unnecessary and need not be used.

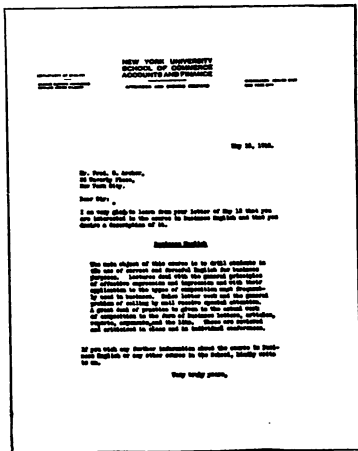
**398.** In official letters the salutation is *Sir*, *Sirs*, or sometimes *Gentlemen*.

### *The Body of the Letter*

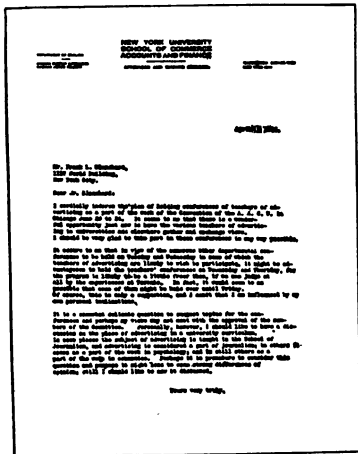
**399.** Before the letter is typed or written the writer should judge the amount of material that is to go on the sheet and plan for the space accordingly. If a typewriting machine is used the margins at the sides should be made



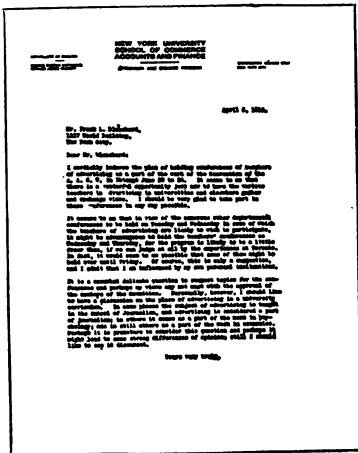
Poor Display.



Good Display.



Poor Display.



Good Display.

Fig. 6

# 164 THE MECHANICAL MAKE-UP OF A LETTER

Page 8

As these overdue accounts come to your notice each month, you will be astonished at the amount involved and at the amount which is gradually going into the debit column of the profit and loss account. A good collection system can overcome such of this.

When customers receive prompt replies to their letters and perceive that their claims are adjusted quickly, they will be pleased to check any statement that comes from this company. Eventually, good feeling will develop, and accounts can be reconciled more readily.

A collection system that brings in the money without hurting the customers' feelings means more business for the Company because the customers who are treated with tact remain customers. An effective collection system, moreover, trains customers to pay up on time, month after month. They sense the system in back of the letters and know that they cannot evade it. Prompt payments will increase our cash on hand.

Any effort put forth to please a customer will re-establish confidence between our firm and the customer. He can be taught from experience that our house can be relied upon. As goodwill develops, we can obtain favors from him, such as requesting him not to deduct claims from remittances until we have investigated the claim and passed credit.

Page 9

**Collection system** As these overdue accounts come to your notice each month, you will be astonished at the amount involved and at the amount which is gradually going into the debit column of the profit and loss account. A good collection system can overcome such of this.

**THE EFFECTS OF THE CHANGE**

**Reconciled accounts** When customers receive prompt replies to their letters and perceive that their claims are adjusted quickly, they will be pleased to check any statement that comes from this company. Eventually, good feeling will develop, and accounts can be reconciled more readily.

**Steady and trained customers** A collection system that brings in the money without hurting the customers' feelings means more business for the Company because the customers who are treated with tact remain customers. An effective collection system, moreover, trains customers to pay up on time, month after month. They sense the system in back of the letters and know that they cannot evade it. Prompt payments will increase our cash on hand.

**Goodwill secured** Any effort put forth to please a customer will re-establish confidence between our firm and the customer. He can be taught from experience that our house can be relied upon. As goodwill develops, we can obtain favors from him, such as requesting him not to deduct claims from remittances until we have investigated the claim and passed credit.

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Fig. 7

Examples of the Different Mechanical Arrangements of a Page of a Report.

deep provided that the letter is short, because a short letter will occupy little space, and this space should be as near in the center of the page as possible.

**400.** All paragraphs are to be indented an equal distance from the margin, say ten spaces or one inch *regardless of the length of the salutation*. It is also wise to use double space between the paragraphs. Some firms use no indention but begin each paragraph flush with the margin. In this case paragraphs are indicated by double or triple spacing between the paragraphs. In the illustration on Page 160 may be seen the correct forms of a typewritten letter.

**401.** If the letter is written in hand-writing, the space between the paragraphs should be double that between other lines.

**402.** Business houses should see that all their correspondence conforms to a certain definite plan, so that the appearance of the letter may be standardized.

### *Complimentary Close*

**403.** The complimentary close follows the body of the letter. As a rule it begins in the middle of the page.

**404.** The following forms are most used in business letters: *Yours truly, Truly yours, Very truly yours, Yours very truly, Yours respectfully*.

**405.** In official letters the complimentary close is *Respectfully, Respectfully submitted, or Yours respectfully*.



**406.** Do not use any abbreviation such as *Y'rs* or *Resp'y* in the complimentary close. Do not write *respectively* for *respectfully*. Do not use *and oblige*, in place of a complimentary close.

**407.** In the complimentary close only the first word should begin with a capital. The proper punctuation at the end is a comma. Such expressions as *Believe me, I beg to remain, I am, I remain*, etc., should not be used, for they are unnecessary and weaken the end.

### *The Signature*

**408.** The signature follows the complimentary close, a little below and to the right so that it ends at the right hand margin.

**409.** In letters from firms, the firm name should be typewritten and below it should come the written signature of the person directly responsible for the letter. Sometimes his signature is preceded by the word *By* and followed by his title such as *President, Secretary, Cashier*, and the like. This title is also typewritten.

**410.** On account of the illegibility of many signatures, some business houses adopt the practice of typing the name of the writer. Below this the writer signs his name. This assures that in an answering letter the writer of the first letter is correctly addressed.

**411.** The signature of the writer, if a man, should not be preceded by any title, such as *Mr., Prof., or Dr.*

**412.** A married woman signs her full name (this includes her maiden name) and places immediately below, in parentheses, her married name.

*Anna Templeton Parsons*  
(*Mrs. Edward F. Parsons*)

**413.** An unmarried woman signs her name with *Miss* in parentheses before it.

#### *Other Points About the Letter*

**414.** The postscript is sometimes added to business letters. The letters *P. S.*, however, are no longer used to label it. Formerly the postscript was used to express some idea which had been forgotten. Now, whenever it is employed, it is for the purpose of emphasizing some important idea; for example, "Remember—in order to take advantage of this offer we must receive your post-card by April 24th." Since it stands out as occupying a unique place in the letter, it should be used to contain an important idea and not simply the last thought of the writer.

**415.** Such expressions as *Dictated but signed in my absence*, *Dictated but not corrected after transcribed*, *Dictated but not read*, *Dictated but not signed*, etc., should never be used, for they are discourteous to the reader of the letter.

**416.** The identity of the dictator and transcriber of the message should never become obtrusive. Expressions such as

*Dictated by Mr. John F. Royal to Miss White, Dictated by Mr. Jones, etc.*, should be omitted. When identification is absolutely necessary it should be made by initials, such as *EJK-C*. Every mark or expression that does not help the message in the main part of the letter should remain inconspicuous, as otherwise it distracts attention from the body of the letter.

**417.** Enclosures should be indicated by the abbreviation *Encl.* placed next to the lower left-hand margin; e. g., *3 Encls.*

**418.** Only one side of the paper should be used whether the letter is written in handwriting or typed. When more than one sheet is necessary to contain the message, plain sheets without the letter head but of the same size and material as the letter head should be used. At the top of these additional sheets is placed the number of the sheet and the initials or the name of the firm or person to whom the letter is sent, as,

The Century Company      2.

**419.** Care should be taken that the last sheet of the letter does not contain only the complimentary close and the signature. The use of a little judgment will prevent that.

**420.** In folding the letter, fold up the bottom edge until it is exactly even with the top edge or one-half inch from the top edge and crease; then fold over from the right

a little more than one-third of the letter and crease. The remainder of the letter is folded over from the left. The free edge of the letter is thus slightly below the right-hand crease. It should be placed in the envelope with the free edge toward yourself.

**421.** The personal attention of a certain individual in a firm is secured to a matter of the firm's business by the expression *Attention of Mr. Johns* written in the center of the page. This may be placed below the salutation or above the inside address. The former position is preferable.

### *The Envelope*

**422.** In business correspondence the envelope is preferably of the standard size,  $6\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{5}{8}$  inches. The return address of the sender should always be printed or written in the upper left-hand corner. It should not be large or conspicuous, and should never be used for advertising purposes. In many cases, as in sales-letters to women and professional classes, a return card or return address is printed on the flap of the envelope. This gives more of a social appearance to the letter and is of aid in getting better results from these classes. In such cases the size of the envelope used is that commonly called "Baronial," which measures about 4 x 5 inches.

**423.** The address should begin slightly below the middle of the envelope and should be well centered. Two forms are used just as in the inside address.

The Smith Hardware Company,  
35 Broadway,  
New York City.

or

The Smith Hardware Company,  
35 Broadway,  
New York City.

**424.** When the straight edge form is used in the inside address this form should also be used on the envelope. The main thing to be considered is that the address should be well balanced.

**425.** The order of the address is usually as follows: first line, name of addressee; second line, street address or box number; third line, city or town, and state or country; or the state or country may be placed on the fourth line.

**426.** The personal attention of a certain individual in a firm is secured to a matter of the firm's business by the expression (*Attention of Mr. Johns*) placed in the lower left-hand corner of the envelope.

**427.** The envelope should have no unsightly blots, finger prints, or erasures. It is better to re-write the letter entirely than to take any chance of marring the effect of an otherwise perfect page by any of these blemishes. Correctness and neatness in a letter are of vital importance in winning a passage to the favorable consideration of the reader.

*Official Letters*

**428.** Official letters are used in writing about matters that are outside the scope of regular business. Any letter that is written by or to an official, or to a business man on any other question than those which come up in the regular routine of business, may be considered an official letter.

**429.** The stationery used in these letters is different from that used for other business communications. As a rule, it is smaller in size, of folder form, and similar to social stationery. When four-page folder sheets are used the fold should be at the right; or, in other words, that page which is ordinarily the back page of the folder is the first page to be written on. If a second page is necessary, the other outside page is used. When three or four pages are to be written on, the best order is the natural, as 1, 2, 3, 4; and not, 1, 2, 4, 3 or 1, 4, 2, 3.

**430.** A small letter head is regularly used. This contains regularly only the name, official business, and address of the sender; sometimes only the address.

**431.** There are two classes of official letters, the formal and the informal.

*Formal Official Letters*

**432.** The formal letter is sent to government officials, members of Congress, officers of the army and navy, and others in high position, and generally to all business men except those with whom the writer is on a footing of familiarity.

**433.** The mechanical form of the formal official letter differs from that of other business letters. The inside address is written at the close of the letter at the left-hand side. In it, all titles are given in full. No abbreviations should be used.

**434.** The salutation is "Sir" or "Sirs". The complimentary close is "Respectfully" or "Very respectfully".

**435.** In the body of the letter, the strictest formality is observed. No abbreviations or colloquial expressions are permissible. Very frequently the third person is used throughout in speaking of the writer. The language is stately, formal and dignified to the point of coldness.

#### *Informal Official Letters*

**436.** Informal official letters are used in writing to business men, who are on terms of familiarity with each other, about matters outside the routine of business. The very informal, conversational tone is desirable. The informal official letter has character, whereas the formal official letter is characterless.

**437.** As in the formal official letter, the inside address is at the lower left-hand corner of the sheet at the end of the letter.

**438.** The salutation is informal; as, "Dear Johnston", "Dear Mr. Johnston", "Dear Fred", or any other salutation the writer pleases to use. The complimentary close may be "Sincerely", "Cordially", or "Faithfully", and others of like tenor.

## XI. THE COMPOSITION AS A WHOLE

### *How Effective Writing May be Secured*

**439.** In a preceding chapter (Rules 18-25) the five qualities of the successful business message were defined. These qualities must be judged from the reader's viewpoint. A letter that is clear to the writer but not to the reader could not be said to have the quality of clearness. This chapter is concerned not so much with the finished result as viewed by the reader as with the principles of construction which aid *the writer* in securing an effective composition.

**440.** The writer knows that if his message is to be read and is to make a good impression upon the mind of the reader, the medium of the message—the English—must have the five qualities mentioned above. He must also know the principles which will aid him to construct the letter or advertisement so that it will have those qualities. This chapter on the composition as a whole explains and illustrates these principles.

### *The Three Principles of Effective Writing*

**441.** The principles of construction are unity, coherence, and emphasis. These principles are not primarily and peculiarly rhetorical laws; they are deductions, crystallized into rules, drawn from experiences that have shown that ideas and thoughts presented in a certain method are most easily and quickly taken in and understood by the mind of the



average person. In other words, the three principles of unity, coherence, and emphasis are natural laws. The writer who applies them will usually find that his ideas and feelings are conveyed clearly and effectively.

### *The Principle of Unity*

**442.** Unity is the principle of selection. It has for its purpose the making of a single, definite impression upon the mind of the reader by presenting a single, definite idea. To achieve this purpose, the writer must select from all the available ideas only those that will contribute to the one idea he wishes to impress.

**443.** The average brain cannot easily grasp two different ideas at the same time. Especially in business is this fact of importance. In actual business work there are so many distractions and so many problems demanding a business man's attention that, unless a message has a singleness of purpose, it will not readily be understood. The writer should concentrate on one idea.

**444.** In the selection of those facts and ideas which are to aid in the thorough development of the main idea or purpose, the writer must exercise his judgment. In many cases this judgment is founded on business experience. The experienced advertising man or sales-letter writer, for example, has learned to select just those closely related points that will carry across to the reader the main idea.

**445.** Before writing a business message, the writer should see and clearly understand its main idea or purpose. In answering a complaint letter, for instance, the purpose is, usually, to conciliate the complainant so that he will continue to do

business with the writer. All material should be included which is essential to accomplish this purpose. If the writer's aim is to get a direct sale from his letter, he should work to that end. If his aim is to get an inquiry which he is to follow up later, he should strive to make every idea in the letter subordinate to that aim. If the writer does not know precisely what course of action he desires the reader to take, how can he expect the reader to know?

**446.** The writer should be sure that his letter contains the points essential to the completeness of his message. If he is writing a letter ordering goods, he should see that that letter contains all the information that is necessary for the filling of the order.

**447.** At the same time the writer should exercise his judgment in excluding all those non-essentials which would only obscure and clog the thought, for every fact that is not needed to help the development and completeness of the thought hinders its comprehension. The writer should also see to it that his composition does not contain non-essentials, for unity means not only the inclusion of essentials but also the exclusion of non-essentials. Every word, sentence, or paragraph that does not help to make the idea complete in its unity, lessens the efficiency of the message. The letter answering a complaint, for example, should not have much space devoted to your excuses, for the reader is not so much interested in the excuses as he is to know what you are going to do about reparation and satisfaction. If the main idea in an advertisement for Victor Victrolas is that of exclusive talent, it is unwise to bring in the use of the Victor for dancing, as it is a non-essential thought to complete the main

idea of exclusive talent. As a result of the inclusion of these two ideas the reader would be confused, for he would be unable to see the relation of the two ideas.

*The Efficiency of Singleness of Impression*

**448.** A letter that makes a complaint and orders goods at the same time is an example of a violation of the principle of unity and also of the principle of efficiency. In such a letter there is no unity of purpose. As a result the reader receives a jumbled impression of what is wanted. But besides that fault there is the trouble caused in handling such a letter. It comes into the business house, where it is opened by the mail clerk, who sees from its first paragraph that it is a complaint letter. He accordingly sends it to the complaint department. The complaint department has other complaint letters on hand, and this particular letter may have to wait until the last. When its time comes, the complaint man handles the letter, and then discovers that the letter should also go to the order department. It is then sent to the order department, where it has to wait until its turn for attention. This may be two or three days after it has been received by the concern. As a result of this violation of unity, the sender of the letter has to wait for his order, and perhaps writes in to find out why it has not been shipped immediately. All of this, of course, has been a waste of time and energy.

**449.** The matter of filing such a letter causes trouble, for the complaint department would want to keep a copy of it as would also the order department. This fact might mean that the letter would have to be copied. A good rule

to follow in business writing, therefore, is that a separate letter should be written for each important message. The result would be a saving in time and trouble for all concerned.

**450.** In the writing of long letters, reports, or advertisements, it is always helpful to block out roughly, either on paper or in your mind, the ideas that you think might be used. You can then select those that you think are essential and reject the rest. Then test your selection by seeing if all the selected ideas can be gathered and expressed in one sentence that sums up the main idea that you desire your reader to receive. The summing-up sentence or key-sentence may be like the following:

“As I am an expert on electrical repairing and installing, you ought to call me up if you have any work to be done.” (See Page 70.)

“If we cannot find your goods in four days, we shall ship duplicate order.” (See Page 69.)

### *The Principle of Coherence*

**451.** Coherence is usually considered as the principle of arranging the ideas that have already been selected so that there will be a constant and logical progression throughout the message. There are two points to be considered in the matter of securing coherence; arrangement or order, and connection.

### *Logical Arrangement of Ideas*

**452.** Proper sequence is important in presenting ideas so that they will be clearly and easily understood. Each step taken in developing our proposition should be apparent. In

colloquial use we often hear the remark, "No, I don't follow you." This remark means that the listener, from the arrangement of the ideas of the speaker, fails to comprehend exactly the speaker's reasoning. Some definite order or arrangement—and an order or arrangement that is apparent to the reader—is therefore necessary.

**453.** In most cases of letter writing, the thought progresses from the viewpoint of the reader to that of the writer. Most people are interested primarily in themselves. If we speak about them, they will listen. The reader of a sales letter or advertisement is not interested to learn at the beginning that the writer wants him to do something. It is the purpose of the writer to lead the reader to that point. An answer to a complaint furnishes a good example. The first step is to conciliate the complainant in order to get him to read the rest of the letter with an unbiased mind. The second step is to state the facts in the case or the explanation of the causes. The third step is to make reparation, or tell why you cannot make it. The fourth step is to ask for a continuance of the business. The letter on Page 69 shows how this idea is carried out in complete detail.

#### *The Use of Connection to Secure Smoothness*

**454a.** The mind likes to get on, to make progress. It likes to move easily, swiftly, smoothly from sentence to sentence, from paragraph to paragraph right through the whole composition until it has come to the end. Hence, a visible connection between paragraphs is an aid in showing the relation between their statements. This visible connection may be shown in these ways:

**454b.** By parallel construction, i. e., several paragraphs may begin with the same sentence construction.

If a man should call on you and tell you that he could solve all of your office problems—that he would guarantee to develop a higher degree of efficiency—show you a better system of handling detail—

If he told you that he had many years of experience in the management of large office organizations—that he was now an officer in a large business training institute, and was also a lecturer on office organization in one of the largest universities—

\* \* \* \* \*

**454c.** By having the second or third paragraph, for example, develop the points made in the preceding paragraph.

Dear Sir:

In accordance with your request of January 25, I am submitting a summary of the estimated economies you will make in insurance and labor by taking space in one of our model loft buildings and giving up your present New York warehouses.

Mr. Slade has carefully investigated the rates of insurance in your present warehouses and has compared them with the existing rate of insurance in our building. This saving, he has estimated, at a rate of 11c in our building as against rates from 42c to 58c in your present warehouses. This saving is approximately \$6,000.

In estimating the saving that you can make in labor cost, Mr. Wolf, without allowing for added efficiency of labor and possible economy in emergency help, has figured that if the entire business is transferred to Brooklyn five porters at \$13 a week can be saved. This amounts to a saving per annum of \$3,380.....

\* \* \* \* \*

**454d.** By having each paragraph depend directly upon the preceding paragraph and carry its thought a step further.

Dear Sir :

Looking over our records a few days ago, I noticed that you haven't been so good a customer of ours in the past twelve months as you used to be, and the more I looked at that record the more I wondered what we had done that caused you practically to stop trading with us.

Finally I decided to drop you a line and ask you whether you are willing to tell me, personally, frankly, just what the trouble has been, and whether there is anything we haven't done that we should have done, and whether there is anything we can do NOW to get you back on our list of regular customers; if we can we surely want to do it.

\* \* \* \* \*

**455.** Even between the paragraphs the use of certain methods of specific connection helps to secure coherence. Among the more important methods are: the use of connectives, of repetition, of transitional sentences, of transitional paragraphs.

**456.** Connectives are connecting words that show the relation of one paragraph to the preceding paragraph, and thus aid the reader in getting the thought. This method is very useful in argumentative and explanatory work, for the connecting words act as sign-posts to point out the intricate way and to show the exact relation that exists between the paragraphs. These connecting words are of various kinds. Sometimes a numeral expression makes a good transition, as *first*, *second*, *third*, and so on. This, of course, is a rather formal method, but sometimes you want to show the reader that you are trying to make certain definite points. Next,

we have such connectives as *therefore, hence, accordingly, as a result*, and so on. Then there are the demonstratives, such as *this, that, those, these*, and the pronouns *he, it, they*, and so on, which refer to the preceding paragraph and thereby connect the two paragraphs.

The judicious and profitable investment of money is essentially a banker's business; the selection of investments in which safety of interest and principal is assured, requires experience and special knowledge.

It is, *therefore*, of the greatest wisdom for the person having idle money to invest, to obtain investments through a sound, well-managed bank which makes a business of handling millions of dollars and has facilities for securing complete, accurate information regarding investments offered.....

**457.** Sometimes the best transition from paragraph to paragraph is brought about by repetition; that is, the first sentence of the new paragraph echoes or repeats a thought in the preceding paragraph.

May we inquire whether you have given any consideration to our recent requests to consult you regarding the *interior decorating* contemplated for your new residence?

As *interior decorating* is our specialty, we are prepared to supply what is required to make a home attractive.....

**458.** In many cases, in order that the reader may see that we are changing our point of view, it is wise to note this change of point of view in the opening sentence of the new paragraph. This type of sentence is called the transitional sentence.

In a similar way the banker in enlisting aid for his railway sets the imaginations of his listeners at work upon a con-



trast between the monotonous present and the brilliant future of their town. When your listener is self-satisfied, talk his disadvantages, weaken his discontent, play upon his need.

*Now, let us take this from another angle.* A man may feel a need yet have both well-grounded objections against your way of supplying it, and false objections or prejudices. ....

**459.** The topic sentence may be used. (A topic sentence is a sentence that contains the idea of the paragraph.) The topic sentence is to the paragraph as a title is to a story.

Example: Advertising, we are told, is a game. So it is. Many people, however, play it as if it were a game of chance, like dice; or luck and bluff, like poker. They seem to think that if they make one wrong guess, they have just as good a chance on the next deal. Far from it. The game of advertising is more like chess. It depends on skill and science and one false move often does more damage than a dozen good ones can repair.

Note: In dictation, especially, is the topic sentence of great assistance. The dictator should know, before he starts to dictate, the distinct topics that he is going to put into the letter. With these topics well arranged in his mind, he should begin by dictating a short sentence which contains the idea. He should then develop the idea into a paragraph. He next dictates his second topic put into the form of a short sentence to begin his second paragraph; he develops this topic as much as he desires, and then goes on with his third paragraph.

The results of this method are: the reader upon reading the first sentence of the paragraph learns in the very first few words of what the writer is writing; the dictator's work is made easier; and a more logical presentation of the ideas is secured.

**460.** Still another way of securing better connection throughout the composition is by the use of transitional paragraphs. A transitional paragraph is a paragraph that is used as a sort of bridge between two important and unrelated ideas, and that serves to prepare the reader for the new idea that is coming.

The quality of this typewriting machine is the same as that of the standard typewriting machine and I need not go into further detail in regard to its construction, its easy running properties, and its durability.

*Since I have discussed the matter of the quality of the machine, I should also take up the matter of price, because you want to know not so much about the quality of the machine, but whether or not you are getting value for your money.*

The price of the machine is \$60. This, as you will note, is \$40 less than the price of the standard machine. If you will.....

**461.** Fast, smooth reading is especially desirable in a sales letter and in advertising copy so that the attention of the reader may be held. The demands of space and of fast reading in sales letters and in advertising copy cause to be used in this case a connotative coherence; i. e., a coherence secured by the logical presentation of the thought assisted but little by the use of expressed connecting phrases or words.

Armour & Company are the biggest in their line. They deserve this position because they know how to do business. I learned a lot from them.

I was in sole charge of their business in my part of the country. I employed all the men. My force included 40 managers and salesmen.

Business grew in my territory—so did my salary. All conceivable plans were followed to boom business on Star Hams, Simon Pure Lard, Armour's Soaps, Extract of Beef, Veribest Canned Meats, Mince Meat, etc. I issued weekly bulletins, salesmen's papers, ginger talks, held conventions, and met bodies of salesmen all over the country. I ran direct to trade campaigns to all the retail dealers—strong business-bringing stuff.

**462.** Another example that shows how speed can be given to a message by the using of a connotative coherence is given below. In this case, although a Postal Telegraph blank was used, this was no telegram, for it was enclosed in an envelope and sent through the mail.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON INSTITUTE

65 ASTOR PLACE, N. Y.

FACTS—ELECTRICAL EXPERIMENTER ALMOST 3  
YEARS OLD THIS IS FIRST ISSUE WE ACCEPT  
ADS REASON DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD PAY  
YOU BEFORE WE HAD 20,000 CIRCULATION GOT  
THAT MUCH NOW ON ALL NEWSSTANDS HIGH  
CLASS CIRCULATION ALL READERS HAVE  
HOBBY ALL SPEND MONEY YOU WANT SOME  
OF THEIR KALE ADVERTISING RATES? SURE  
JUST DROP POSTAL RUSH GOING TO PRESS  
10TH HAND SHAKE

233 FULTON ST  
N Y

ELECTRICAL EXPERIMENTER  
8.39 P M

**463.** So far coherence has been discussed as a matter of externals—of mechanical arrangement and connection—but that discussion did not apparently cover the whole matter of

coherence. Can there be an internal coherence? By internal coherence is meant a constant forward movement through the reading matter caused by an aroused interest in the mind. No matter how logically arranged are the ideas in an advertisement, no matter how well connected they are, yet there may be no forward movement through the text. The average mind may have no active desire to move through, and, if the mind does not move through, there is no coherence. On the other hand, even though the ideas were illogically arranged, even though they were not joined by connectives, yet there might be a forward movement of the mind through the text, if—the—ideas—were—interesting—to—the—mind.

**464.** In sales letters and in advertising copy, paragraphs are like so many ties in a trestle crossing a river. The reader must step over the gaps between the ties. We ordinarily help him over these gaps by means of a transition, but this ordinary way will not always do. The reader of sales letters and advertising copy will not step over the gaps unless he is *impelled* onward by an interest already aroused, or unless he is *drawn on* by an interest in the paragraph ahead. This is a matter of active coherence—a coherence which is present because of the interest in the mind of the reader. Active coherence might therefore be defined as the quality which influences the reader to read from the first sentence, right through the entire composition without a break. This is a vital principle, for the success of most sales letters and advertisements is based on it.

**465.** In a sales letter and in advertising copy it would, therefore, be necessary to have the opening paragraph of

interest to the reader. Once we have secured this interest, we should see that it is held throughout the reading of the whole composition. The reader will continue to read so long as his interest remains unabated.

**466.** We can draw the reader on by putting at the beginning of each new paragraph something of interest. At the end of one paragraph he glances across the space to the first sentence of the next paragraph. If he sees that there is something interesting at the beginning of the next paragraph, he will step across to read.

### *Emphasis*

**467.** The third principle of construction is the principle of emphasis—a principle primarily of arrangement. The usual purpose is to make certain points stand out of the general mass and impress the reader. Another purpose of emphasis is to use to best advantage the important places in a letter or advertisement.

**468.** The principle of emphasis is not so commonly used as the other two principles of construction. For emphasis is applied only when the writer desires to lay stress on certain ideas that are important. The writer has little need for the principle of emphasis in the writing of an ordinary routine letter—say a perfunctory acknowledgment of the payment of a bill, or an ordinary order letter. Emphasis is, however, of great importance in advertisements and sales letters, for these types of Business English meet strong competition, and, if they are to serve their purpose, must be strongly and emphatically written—or as advertising writers have it, they must have *punch*.

**469.** In most business letters, pamphlets, advertisements, and so on, certain facts and ideas are of more importance than others. In order that these facts and ideas may not be overlooked by the reader, in order that they may be forced into the reader's attention, and in order that the main point may be more forcibly impressed, various methods are used. The most common of the methods used to secure the desired emphasis are by position and proportion.

*The Use of Position to Secure Emphasis*

**470.** The first of the two methods of securing emphasis is by position; that is, by placing the important ideas in the important places, or by the careful utilization of the important positions of a letter or advertisement. It is a well-known fact that the impressiveness of a written story or an oral presentation depends for a large measure on the introduction and conclusion—the beginning and ending. Just as true, but not so widely known, is the fact that the impressiveness of a letter or advertisement depends on the beginning and ending.

**471.** The two most important places in a letter deserve the most important ideas. The beginning is an important place because it makes the first impression on the reader, and the first impression determines the attitude or frame of mind of the reader. The ending is important because it is read last, and hence, other things being equal, will remain longest in the mind of the reader.

**472.** That the beginning and ending of the letter should be regarded as of greatest value and should contain ideas of importance or interest seems obvious. Yet the great bulk

of letters begin with some such expression as "Yours of the 15th instant received and contents noted." Of course, the letter has been received and noted or the reply would not have been written. These same letters are likely to end with the weak, sliding off, participial ending "Hoping and trusting to receive an early and favorably reply, we beg to remain." To take up the most important places of a letter with these common and useless expressions is a waste of opportunity and of valuable space.

### *How to Begin the Letter*

**473.** The beginning of a letter should accomplish an important part of the purpose of the letter. Just what it should accomplish depends on the kind of letter that is being written.

**474.** The best method of presenting ideas in business letters is to start with the reader's point of view. The idea that is of importance to the reader, that fits in well with his viewpoint, should therefore be put at the beginning. The idea that is of importance to the writer should be kept until the end.

**475.** Take for an example the answering of a complaint. The first and natural thought of the writer is to give his excuses, but those are not of prime interest to the reader. The writer should take the complainant's viewpoint and try to get him in a suitable state of mind to listen to the writer's side of the complaint. This is done by starting off with a conciliatory paragraph which tells the reader that his complaint will be satisfactorily adjusted. That is what

he wants to know. An example of a good beginning is as follows:

Dear Madam:

Thank you for your candid letter of Jan. 19 in which you call our attention to the fact that the shirtwaist you purchased on Jan. 14 does not come up to the usual high standard of goods handled by our store. You can rest assured that everything will be satisfactorily arranged.....

Such a beginning is good because it takes the reader's viewpoint, tells an important idea right at the start, and helps accomplish the purpose of the letter by getting the reader into the right attitude of mind.

**476.** A general rule to follow in most cases (sales letters are a notable exception) is to show the purpose of your letter at the beginning. If this is done, the reader will know from the start what the letter is about.

**477.** It is always best to acknowledge in the first sentence the receipt of the letter to which you are replying, for such identification helps the reader to understand at once what you are writing about.

**478.** The preceding statement does not mean, however, that the first sentence should be taken up wholly with the remark "Yours of the 29th ult. just to hand and contents noted." Such preliminary remarks absorb part of the reader's attention, kill interest, and accomplish nothing. A good way is to begin the letter with an idea that is of importance to the reader, into which the acknowledgment is woven in an unobtrusive way. The following beginnings are characteristic of good letters:



We are unable to give you the information you ask for in your letter of May 15 concerning the financial standing of John F. Andrews, who.....

The catalogue you sent for on August 27 has been mailed....

Your order of October 10, we are sorry to say, has been delayed in shipment, but.....

Thank you for your letter of April 14 in which you call our attention to the mistake made on our last invoice, our number 54643.....

**479.** There are several other ways of acknowledging a letter. One of these is by placing the acknowledgment in the center of the letter above the inside address. This acknowledgment will read:

“Replying to your letter of October 14.”

“In reply to your letter of October 14.”

“In re your letter of October 14.”

“Answering Mr. Brown’s letter of October 14.”

Still another way is by placing the kind of acknowledgment shown above in the center of the letter just below the salutation. These various ways are neither so commonly used nor so good as weaving the acknowledgment into some important idea and placing it in the first sentence. After a little practice the letter writer will grow accustomed to opening his letter with a sentence that expresses an important idea, uses a tone that helps to achieve the purpose of the letter, and at the same time contains the acknowledgment in a manner that, because it is unhackneyed, impresses the reader favorably.

**480.** The beginning of a sales letter or advertisement

must be such as to grip the reader's attention. The words and ideas presented in the first line are important, for they determine in many cases whether or not the letter will be read.

### *How to End the Letter*

**481.** A very important place or position is the ending. But like the beginning of the letter, the ending is often given over to the expression of an unimportant idea or to the weak expression of an important idea.

**482.** In many cases the writer throws away an opportunity to end his letter with a sentence that will drive home the idea the reader should get by filling the valuable space at the end with a hackneyed, sliding-off, participial ending, such as "Hoping that you will find this arrangement satisfactory and trusting that we may hear from you soon, we beg to remain."

**483.** Many writers, after they have finished what they have had to say, tack on a participial ending, which leads into "We beg to remain." They do this because they are afraid that otherwise the close of the letter might seem abrupt. An abrupt ending is often undesirable, but it can easily be avoided without the use of the weak, participial ending.

**484.** If the idea is important it should be expressed in a strong way in the form of a definite statement and not in the form of a participial construction—one of the weakest forms of construction of the English language. If the idea is unimportant, it should be left out, or, at least should not occupy one of the most important places in the letter.

It is better, therefore, to make a definite statement, and write "We sincerely hope that you will find this arrangement satisfactory;" then put in a complimentary close, as "Yours very truly." That ending is not abrupt.

### *The Use of Proportion to Secure Emphasis*

**485.** The securing of emphasis by the use of proportion means that the important ideas should be given as much space as is needed to treat them with sufficient detail. This result cannot be accomplished if too much room is taken up with details of the unimportant ideas. The writer should first find out the amount of space he has at his disposal; next, he should judge the relative importance of the ideas he intends to put into this space; and then he should give to the important ideas as much space as they require before he puts in the unimportant ideas. Proportion is a matter of judgment.

### *The Use of Climax to Secure Emphasis*

**486.** The climax can be used to secure emphasis. The climax is a series of thoughts or statements which gradually increase in importance. It is secured by arranging ideas in the order of their importance with the most important last. In true climax, a weaker or less important thought never follows a stronger one. Although commonly used in sentences and paragraphs, it is seldom used in a whole composition unless the whole composition happens to be an advertisement or letter that consists of a paragraph or a sentence. Of this an example follows:

By thinking of Gold Medal Flour—  
 And reading of Gold Medal Flour—  
 And hearing of Gold Medal Flour—  
 You will EVENTUALLY  
 come to having Gold Medal Flour—  
 With much satisfaction and  
 economy to yourself.  
 WHY NOT NOW?

For its absolute correctness of construction, for the perfect control and noiselessness of its power, for its inspiring dignity of appearance, and for studied attention to every smallest detail that provides complete comfort and relaxation, the White Berline stands unequalled.

**487.** It is a part of human nature to put one's best argument first so that a deep impression may be made on the reader. This instinct invariably leads the writer into an anti-climax, for if he places his strongest argument first, his other arguments which follow must of necessity be weaker. So it is that the writer must exercise not only judgment in selecting his most important ideas but also self-restraint in the matter of placing them.

**488.** If an advertisement or letter contains several arguments, the strongest argument should not come first, for the reader in reading through the composition will feel that it is getting weaker and weaker.

### *The Use of Pause to Secure Emphasis*

**489.** Speakers commonly use the pause to secure emphasis; that is, just before they are to present an important point, they pause. This pause serves several purposes. It

allows the listener time to assimilate that which he has just heard and to catch up with the speaker. The whole amount of the attention of the listener is then ready to be given to the idea that is to be presented next. The pause, moreover, announces that an idea of importance is to follow.

**490.** The pause may be used to good effect in advertisements and in sales letters to secure a stress or an emphasis. A dash placed before the word to be stressed will give the desired effect.

“We have been lacking something that we needed most—  
efficiency.”

“For the best cleanser, for an aid to a clear complexion,  
for something that is more than mere soap, there is only  
one thing—PALMOLIVE.”

**491.** The pause can be secured in another way by the paragraphing of a single word or phrase, for the white space serves the same purpose here as the element of time does to the speaker. The mind of the reader catches up with the eye, for it has been given time to assimilate that which has just been read. It is then not only ready to attack the next idea, but is also informed that an idea of importance is to follow.

### *Emphasis Secured by Mechanical Means*

**492a.** Emphasis on a certain word, phrase, and even a clause can be secured by certain mechanical devices. Some of these can be used in the typewritten letter; all of them can be used in printed matter.

**492b.** Emphasis can be secured by the use of capitals or bold face type.

Example: We will let YOU be the judge.

**492c.** Emphasis can be secured by the use of italics.

Example: But you must send in your order before *to-night*.

**492d.** Emphasis can be secured by spacing a word.

Example: Sapolio uses 'up s-l-o-w-l-y.

**492e.** Emphasis can be secured by underlining.

Example Take advantage of this offer now!

**492f.** Emphasis can be secured in the entire clause by spacing the words.

Example: This agency is yours if—you—will—act—now!

**492g.** Emphasis can be secured by the use of a dash before the word to be stressed.

Example: The one thing that you need most in your office is—efficiency.

**492h.** Emphasis can be secured by the use of color on a typewriter that uses a two-color ribbon; an important word can be typed in red.

**492i.** Emphasis can be secured by a combination of the various points given above.

Note: A word of caution should be given in regard to the use of mechanical emphasis. The end of emphasis is defeated if these devices are used too often: they attract special attention and secure emphasis only because they are seldom used. [If a letter is written entirely in capitals with the exception of one or two words which are in lower case type, these words would stand out and become emphatic because they are different in make-up from the other words.

If the letter or advertisement shouts all the time, the important word or words will be unable to make themselves heard above the unimportant. Hence emphasis should be carefully and sparingly used.]

## HOW TO DICTATE ANSWERS TO LETTERS

**493.** The following hints are of aid in learning how to dictate answers to letters:

1. Read the letter very carefully and understand what the writer says or tries to say.

2. As you read the letter pick out the subjects or questions which are to be answered, and to these add questions or doubts which should be settled to make the answer to the letter complete. These questions may be numbered as you go along.

3. Gather the facts with which you are to answer the letter. Arrange them in the most logical order.

4. If there is a problem of business policy involved, determine on your attitude before you start to dictate.

5. *Decide what action, if any, you wish to have the reader take, and make your message work toward that end.*

6. Consider carefully the kind of man the reader is and adapt yourself to him in language, mood, and character. If you find that you are unable to put yourself in the right mood and attitude, it is better to postpone the dictation. It is most important that the tone of your letter be suitable.

7. Dictate slowly and speak distinctly. By doing so you will be able to think accurately as you dictate and you will also be helping the transcriber.

8. Concentrate your thoughts upon the ideas that you are trying to express and impress through the letter upon the reader. Continually keep the reader in mind and talk as though he sat facing you.

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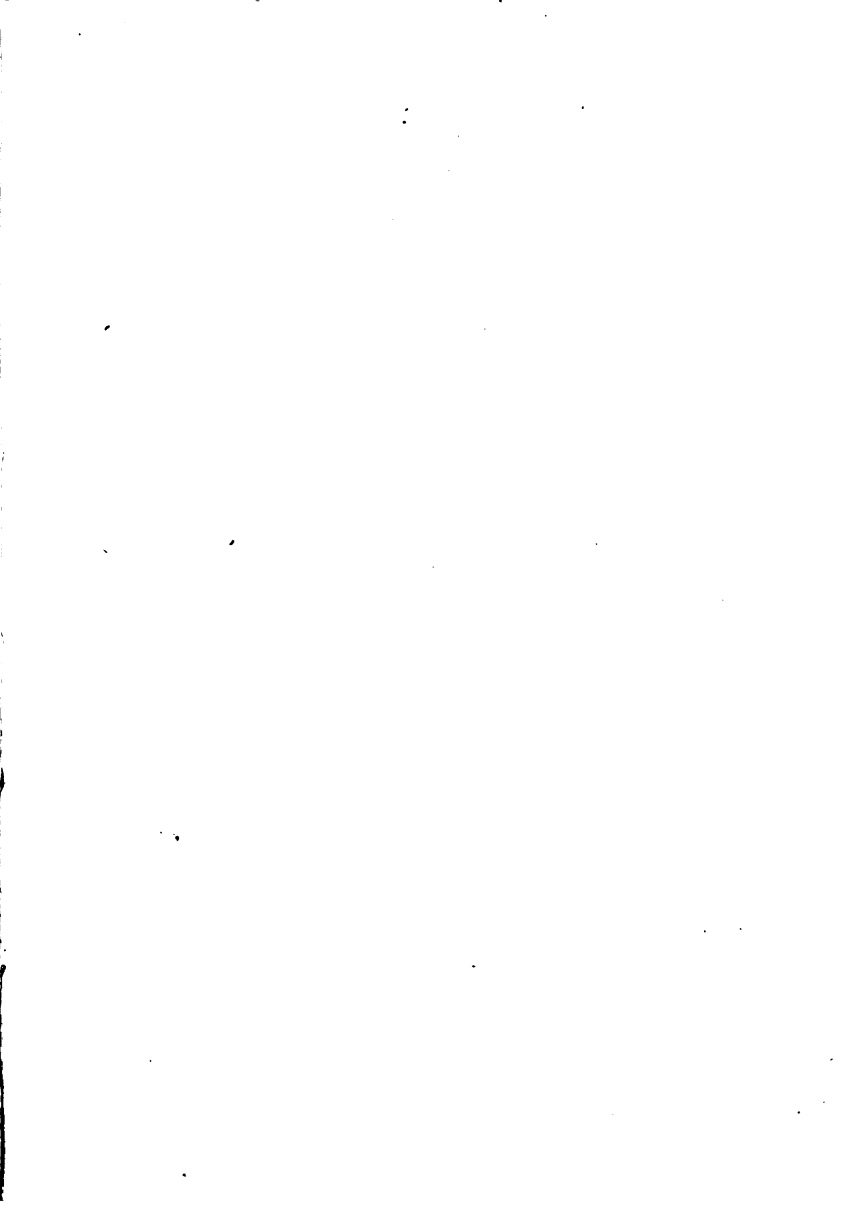
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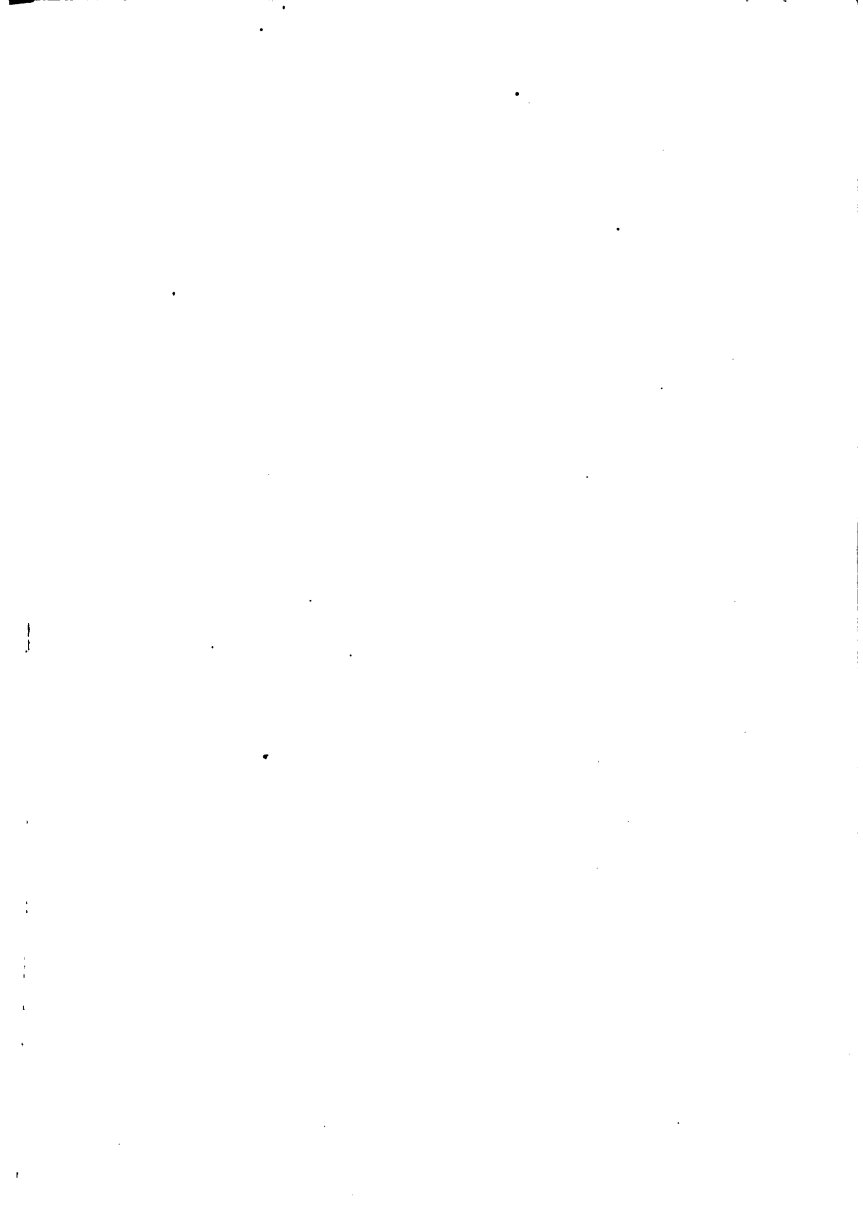
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